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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Four killed in Chintamani bus, bike collision

CHINTAMANI, 23 OCT

Four people, including a child, were killed in a head-on collision between a college bus and a motorcycle at Burudugunte village under Kencharlahalli Police limits in Chintamani taluk on Thursday evening. The accident occurred around 6pm when the motorcycle collided with a college bus coming from the opposite direction. The deceased are Balaji, 35; his father-in-law Venkateshappa, 50; Balaji's son Arya, 4; and their relative Harish, 11; all residents of Chilakalanerpu village in Sidalaghatta taluk. According to Shivakumar, Police Sub-Inspector of Kencharlahalli Police Station, the victims were returning home after attending a wedding at Talakayalabetta Hills when the crash took place, killing all four on the spot. The bus, belonging to Vikram College in Chintamani, was returning after dropping students at their respective villages. Police have registered a case. — *Salar News*

Govt likely to mandate labelling of AI content

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

The IT Ministry has proposed amendments to the IT Rules, 2021, aimed at tackling AI-generated deepfakes and synthetically created content. Under the draft, significant social media platforms with over 50 lakh users will be required to clearly label AI-generated material and embed metadata for easy identification. Platforms must verify user declarations on whether content is synthetically generated and ensure labels cover at least 10 per cent of visual or initial audio duration. The rules also prohibit removing or altering such labels. The Ministry said the move seeks to enhance accountability, promote user awareness, and prevent misuse of deepfakes for misinformation, reputation damage, financial fraud, or election manipulation. Public feedback on the draft is invited until 6 November, 2025. —*Agencies*

Yathindra backs Satish for CM in 2028, renews row

BELAGAVI, 23 OCT

Public Works Department Minister Satish Jarkiholi on Thursday sought to downplay Yathindra Siddaramaiah's comments hinting he could be State's next Chief Minister, saying it was merely the Congress leader's personal opinion. "The decision on leadership will be taken collectively by the Congress Legislature Party and the party high command," Jarkiholi told reporters.

Speaking in Belagavi, Jarkiholi, considered one of the aspirants for the post, said he had only expressed his intention to contest for the top position after the 2028 Assembly elections.

Yathindra, son of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, had stated on Wednesday that a leader from the AHINDA community (minorities, backward classes, and Dalits) should head the next Congress government. "The organisation believes that a leader from the AHINDA community should succeed Siddaramaiah in the next term," said Jarkiholi.

Addressing a gathering in Chikkodi, Yathindra said his father was at the "end of his political life" and praised Jarkiholi for his progressive ideology and commitment. "It is difficult to have leaders who are committed to principles, but Jarkiholi is doing his job with commitment. He should continue to do so," he added.

"More than a dozen legislators are aspiring for the Chief Minister's post, and I am one among them," Jarkiholi remarked with a smile.

Speculation about a leadership change has been rife, with Shivakumar, a prime contender, emphasising he and Siddaramaiah will work together as per the party's direction. —*PTI*

VIP Chief Mukesh Sahni speaks with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav as CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya looks on during INDIA bloc press conference in Patna on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

INDIA bloc names Tejashwi as CM face

VIP Chief Mukesh Sahani to be his deputy

PATNA, 23 OCT

The opposition INDIA bloc on Thursday named RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav as its chief ministerial candidate for the Bihar Assembly elections, in a bid to end internal disputes and project unity.

The announcement was made by senior Congress leader Ashok Gehlot, who said the decision had the approval of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi. Addressing a joint press conference, Gehlot added that Vikassheel Insan Party (VIP) chief Mukesh Sahani and leaders from other communities would be deputy chief ministers if the alliance comes to power, reflecting Bihar's complex social fabric.

Sahani, a former Bollywood set designer has alternated between alliances with the BJP and the RJD-Congress combine. Despite his party winning four seats in 2020, he lost his own contest and was later expelled from the Nitish Kumar cabinet after clashing with the BJP.

Yadav thanked allies for their support, promising a corruption-free administration and dismissing the BJP's "jungle raj" charge as propaganda. "Tejashwi will never compromise on corruption, not even with his own shadow," he said. Congress leader Pawan Khera asserted that the INDIA bloc had shown leadership by naming its CM face first, challenging the NDA to do the same.

BJP, meanwhile, mocked the opposition as a "divided house," claiming Yadav and Sahani were chosen "out of compulsion." It also alleged that the RJD had shown Congress its "aukat" by excluding Rahul Gandhi's photo from the alliance's posters. Meanwhile, two nominees of the INDIA bloc withdrew their candidature from Nawada and Madhubani. —*PTI*

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6 SUSPECTS IDENTIFIED

Rs 80 paid for every voter deletion in Aland: K'taka SIT

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged 'vote chori' (vote theft) in Karnataka's Aland constituency during the 2023 Assembly elections has identified six suspects who allegedly charged Rs 80 per deleted vote.

According to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), attempts were made to delete 6,994 names, mostly belonging to Dalit and minority Congress supporters. "We questioned about 30 people; five to six are strong suspects and may be arrested soon," a senior official said.

The alleged scam came to light when Congress MLA B R Patil and Minister Priyank Kharge—son of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, alerted the Chief Electoral Officer after detecting mass deletion requests. Patil claimed that had the deletions gone through, he would have lost his seat. He eventually defeated BJP's

Subhash Guttedar by around 10,000 votes. Investigators found the suspects were linked to a Kalaburagi-based data centre that used voice-over-internet protocols to manipulate voter lists. The SIT has raided premises linked to the suspects as well as those of Guttedar, his sons Harshananda and Santosh, and their chartered accountant. Burnt voter records were discovered near Guttedar's residence, which he dismissed as a Deepavali clean-up exercise.

Minister Priyank Kharge said on X that "voters were deleted for just Rs 80 in Aland," calling it part of the BJP's #VoteChori "playbook". —*PTI*

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Defence Ministry clears ₹79,000 cr for military hardware

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

Defence Ministry on Thursday approved procurement proposals worth Rs 79,000 crore. The clearances, given by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), mark the second major procurement decision since Operation Sindoor.

For the Navy, approvals include Landing Platform Docks (LPDs), 30-mm Naval Surface Guns, Advanced Lightweight Torpedoes, Electro Optical Infra-Red Search and Track Systems, and smart ammunition for the 76-mm Super Rapid Gun Mount. The Army will acquire Nag Missile Systems (Tracked) Mk-II, Ground-Based Mobile ELINT Systems and High-Mobility Vehicles to bolster anti-armour warfare. For the Air Force, DAC cleared the procurement of the Collaborative Long-Range Target Saturation/Destruction System, capable of autonomous take-off, navigation and payload delivery. —*PTI*

NEW DAY, SAME OLD TRAFFIC

Traffic on Bengaluru's busy Mysuru Road came to a standstill on Thursday as the holiday season ended, with people returning to the City and resuming their normal routines **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Reliance to stop buying Russian oil

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), India's largest buyer of discounted Russian crude, is set to scale back imports following fresh US sanctions on Moscow-linked firms, sources said. State-run refiners, however, may continue purchases through intermediaries for now.

RIL, which operates the world's largest single-site refinery at Jamnagar, has been purchasing nearly half of the 1.7–1.8 million barrels per day of Russian crude shipped to India. Reliance bought about USD 35 billion in oil from Russia since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, accounting for 8 per cent of Moscow's crude sales. In 2021, before the Ukraine war, Reliance bought just USD 85 million worth of Russian oil.

The company refines this into petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel, exporting a large share to Europe and the US at market rates, making huge profit. The situation changed after US President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoi, Russia's two largest oil companies, accusing them of funding the Kremlin's "war machine" in Ukraine. .

Reliance, which has a 25-year deal with Rosneft to buy up to 5,00,000 barrels per day, is now expected to reduce and possibly halt purchases. The company's significant business exposure in the US leaves it little room for risk, sources said.

Having imported an estimated USD 35 billion worth of Russian crude since February 2022, Reliance began "recalibrating" its sourcing after the EU's 18th sanctions package in July. All transactions with the sanctioned firms must be wound down by 21 Nov. —*PTI*

Direct Shanghai to Delhi flights to resume from 9 Nov

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

China Eastern Airlines will restart direct flights between Shanghai and Delhi from 9 November, marking a key step in the revival of India-China air connectivity. The three weekly flights, on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, will operate using an A330-200 aircraft, the airline said in a statement.

This follows the resumption of India-China direct services on 26 October, when IndiGo restarted flights connecting Kolkata and Guangzhou after more than five years. Direct air links were halted in early 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions following the Ladakh border standoff. —*PTI*

India will stop buying Russian oil by yr end: Don

WASHINGTON, 23 OCT

US President Donald Trump has reiterated that India will "almost stop" buying oil from Russia by the end of the year, saying the process will take time. He claimed Prime Minister Narendra Modi had assured him that imports would be reduced to "almost nothing," describing India as "absolutely great" in its cooperation.

Meanwhile, Modi will skip the ASEAN meetings in Kuala Lumpur, attending virtually instead, which means that he will not meet Trump amid the ongoing tiff. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will represent India at the 20th East Asia Summit on 27 October.

Trump also said he would urge China, another major buyer of Russian crude, to do the same. Ties between New Delhi and Washington remain strained after Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to 50 per cent, including a 25 per cent additional duty linked to India's Russian oil purchases. —PTI

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Govt begins process to appoint new CJI

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

The government has begun the process to appoint the next Chief Justice of India (CJI) as incumbent Justice BR Gavai prepares to retire on 23 November. A letter is expected shortly, requesting Justice Gavai to recommend his successor, in line with the established Memorandum of Procedure. This framework stipulates that the seniormost Supreme Court judge deemed fit should be appointed.

Justice Surya Kant, currently the seniormost judge after Justice Gavai, is next in line to become the 53rd CJI. Born on 10 February, 1962 in Haryana, he joined the Supreme Court on 24 May, 2019. —*PTI*

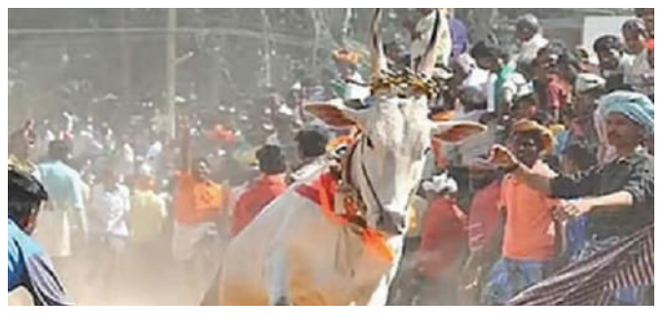
NO SAFETY MEASURES

3 killed in Haveri as bull fighting goes wrong

HAVERI, 23 OCT

Three people were killed in separate incidents across Haveri district on Thursday after bulls ran amok during Kobbari Hori Bedarisu (bull-fighing) competitions and processions held as part of Deepavali celebrations, Haveri Superintendent of Police Yeshoda Vantagudi said.

In Daneshwari Nagar, retired HESCOM employee Chandrashekhar Kodihalli, 75, died after being gored by a bull while returning home near the Baroda Bank branch. In Devihosur village, Ghanisab, 75, was killed when



a frightened bull participating in the event ran into a house and attacked him. At Tilavalli in Hanagal taluk, Bharath, 24, died after being gored near the Durgambika Dhaba. All victims succumbed to their injuries despite being taken to Haveri District Hospital.

uperintendent of Police Vantagudi said the organisers — members of the Gavali (milkmen) community — would be booked for negligence, as they failed to adhere to conditions stipulated in the event permit. The community has a long-standing tradition of organising bull runs on public roads, where decorated bulls are provoked to charge forward by beating drums, often endangering onlookers.

"Murder charges under Section 103 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita," the SP said.

Hori Habba, also known as Hatti Habba, is a traditional rural festival popular in districts such as Shivamogga, Haveri and Uttara Kannada. Police have registered separate cases. —*Salar News*

DEEPAVALI EYE INJURIES

Doctors treat patients injured during Deepavali at City's Minto Eye hospital on Thursday. Some 100 people suffered eye injuries in the City *MOHAMMAD ASAD*

Yathindra's successor remarks causes rumble

Ashoka says DKS should go to 'Italy temple' in jibe at Sonia

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah set off a massive political storm by suggesting that his father was in the "fag end" of his political career and suggested that the CM mentored Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi. He praised Jarkiholi as a leader with "similar progressive ideological thinking".

The comment comes amid rumours of a change in guard on a "November revolution".

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, considered a strong contender for the top post, declined to comment, saying, "I don't want to say anything now. I don't want to be part of the media. I will discuss later at an appropriate time."

Shivakumar had a fought vehemently with Siddaramaiah for the Chief Ministerial post when the Congress won the 2023 elections before eventually being made the Deputy.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R Ashoka and IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge *PHOTO: PTI*

However, Opposition Leader R Ashoka mocked Shivakumar. Speaking to press in Davangere, he said that Shivakumar should visit an Italian temple, a jibe at his loyalties to the Gandhi family. The BJP frequently targets party leader Sonia Gandhi over her ties to Italy.

There is no benefit in running temples like Chamundi, Maramma, Gouramma, Raghavendra Swamy. There is a bigger temple than these temples, the Italian Temple, Ashoka said.

IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge defended Jarkiholi, saying he was among the Congress leaders upholding the party's ideology. "He has been running a campaign against superstition and for the Constitution. There is nothing wrong in that," said Kharge, son of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. On Shivakumar's frequent temple visits, Kharge said the Deputy CM had "always been a devotee" but that media attention was new.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre said the KPCC post was not vacant. *—Salar News*

HORROR IN VARUNA

A secluded residence in Hunaganahalli village on Bannur Road in Mysuru district; a progesterone bottle lying in the premises *PHOTO: SALAR*

Female foeticide racket busted in CM's constituency

MYSURU, 23 OCT

Five people have been arrested for their alleged involvement in an organised female foeticide scam in Mysuru, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said on Thursday. The gang operated in Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's Varuna constituency.

The network, involved in illegal sex determination tests and sex-selective abortion, is suspected to have links to a similar racket reported from Mandya two years ago.

Health authorities managed to trap those involved in foeticide at Hunaganahalli village on Bannur road.

Health authorities in Nagamangala and Mandya launched an investigation after a woman had reported about the incident, Mysuru District Health Officer Dr PC Kumaraswamy told Salar.

The uncovered an illegal scanning operation used to determine the sex of the foetus at a secluded farmhouse some 13kms away from Mysuru city.

A team of health authorities carried out the raid with police, caught the accused red handed and seized the ultrasound scanning machines, medicines, and tablets for medical pregnancy termination. Four pregnant women were present at the scene.

- The prime accused said that they were targetting women in rural areas, charging Rs 25,000 for sex determination and up to Rs 1 lakh for medical termination of female embryos. Five people were arrested on the spot

The network was run out of the private SK Hospital.

Police arrested the owner Shyamala, in presence of her brother Govindaraju, agent Puttaraju and the family members of two pregnant women who were at the scene, Kumaraswamy said.

During the interrogation, Shyamala stated that they were targeting women from rural areas, charging Rs 25,000 for sex determination and up to Rs 1 lakh for medical termination of female embreyos.

Cases were also registered against the parents of pregnant women for encouraging the sex determination. *—Salar News*

BJP appoints leaders for positions in GBA

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

The Opposition BJP announced the positions of leaders for the upcoming Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), the BJP announced Authority Coordinators, Organisational District Coordinators, and the Chiefs and Co-Chiefs for the five municipalities. These include State President BY Vijayendra, Leader of Opposition in Legislative Assembly R Ashoka, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy and Benglauru South MP Tejasvi Surya among others. The Chiefs of the organisational districts includes CK Ramamurthy for Bengaluru South; S Harish for Bengaluru North; and AR Saptagiri Gowda for Bengaluru Centre. *—SALAR NEWS*

KITTUR JAYANTHI

Kannada & Culture Minister Shivaraj N Tangadagi celebrates Kittur Rani Chennamma Jayanthi in the City on Thursday *PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD*

3 held for gangrape in City, hunt on for 2 more

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

Three people have been arrested in connection with a gangrape case and for robbing the woman at a private residence in City's Gangagondanahalli, police said on Thursday.

According to Bengaluru Rural Superintendent of Police (SP) CK Baba, a woman from West Bengal was allegedly gangraped by a group of five men, who had targeted a residence comprising three adjacent houses late Wednesday night. The accused barged into her home during their operation.

Three special teams have been formed to arrest all the accused.

"The perpetrators also stole two mobile phones and Rs 25,000 in cash. Of the five, three accused have been taken into custody, while efforts continue to locate and arrest the remaining two," SP Baba said.

"The victims are residents of West Bengal, whereas the accused are locals," he added. *—ANI*

K Eregowda elected as Mysuru Milk Union Prez

MYSURU, 23 OCT

K Eregowda has been elected unopposed as president of Mysuru Milk Union Limited (MYMUL), following an election held at the Mymul administrative block on Thursday. The position was vacant after the resignation of former president Cheluvaraju. As Eregowda was the sole nominee, joint registrar Sridhar, serving as returning officer, officially declared his election. Both Sridhar and Mymul managing director KN Sureshnayak congratulated Eregowda. Representing HD Kote taluk, Eregowda expressed his gratitude to CM Siddaramaiah and other ministers for their support: "Even though I had chances of becoming president on previous occasions, I am elected unopposed today." *—SALAR NEWS*

GBA area to be expanded soon, says DKS

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that Union Urban Development Minister Manoharlal Khattar has agreed to hold the meeting of Urban development ministers of South Indian States in Benglauru on 30 October while adding that the Greater Bengaluru Authority area (GBA) area was likely to be expanded.

Speaking to press, he said, "Union Minister for Urban Development is participating in the meeting and we will submit our memorandum on Bengaluru development. We have already submitted our appeals to Union ministers and PM several times in the past." Giving out details of areas that may be included into the GBA, he said, "I have called for a meeting of officials to discuss this on Friday. A Committee under the leadership of BS Patil is preparing a report on this."

"We will hold meetings with IT-BT companies after winding up the Walk with Bengaluru programme this weekend," he said. "There are about 25 lakh people on the periphery of GBA currently and we will need to include them to GBA." *—Salar News*

Permission for RSS march is up to the district admin, says HM

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

Home Minister G Parameshwara said the district administration holds the authority to make the final decision on granting the RSS permission for the its centenary march in Chittapur on 24 Oct.

The clarification comes in response to a recent emergency order issued by the State government.

"There is clarity in the emergency order that has been issued now. The department will issue an official order specifying it in more detail. It is now up to the district administrations to make the decisions. In the case of Chittapur, multiple organisations have applied together for permission," he said.

The row erupted after IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge, who represents the Chittapur constituency, penned a letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, urging him to curb RSS activities in schools and public places.

BJP LEADER BOOKED

A case was registered against registered at the Brahmapur Police Station in Kalaburagi against BJP leader and Chittapur candidate Manikant Rathod for threatening Priyank. Rathod had said that a RSS worker could enter Priyank's house and beat him. *—Salar with agencies*

MAYBE GODS WILL FIX THE ROADS

People in Mandya district protest against potholes in a tradition way by performing pooja and garlanding the roads on Thursday *PHOTO: SALAR*

AFTER CENTRE SAYS NO MENSTRUAL LEAVE, CONG MLC WRITES TO RAGA

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

Congress MLC Ramesh Babu has written to party leader Rahul Gandhi, asking him to urge the Central government to implement a menstrual leave policy for all women after the State government recently approved the same.

Attaching a Lok Sabha response from 24 March 2023 which said that there was no framework for such leaves and it was he urged Gandhi to implement such a policy. The Centre said that menstruation was a normal phenomenon and could be managed by medication. "Central Govt is not in favour of women to consider menstrual leave," he wrote. He said if the Centre implemented the policy, it would have widespread implications for other states and the private sector. *—Salar News*

Four injured in stabbing during Yadgir love marriage panchayat

YADGIR, 23 OCT

A violent incident occurred during a community meeting, known as a Nyaya Panchayat, held to discuss the love marriage of Shobha and Mallareddy in Honagera village. The couple, who had worked together in Bengaluru, secretly married in a temple without informing their families. Upon learning of the union, a meeting was convened in the presence of community elders to organise a formal ceremony.

Tensions escalated during the gathering, resulting in a heated argument. According to reports, the girl's family accused Nirmal, a relative of Mallareddy, of orchestrating the marriage. In the midst of the chaos, Nirmal allegedly attacked four individuals: Veerappa, Mallappa, Mallesh, and another Mallappa. Veerappa sustained serious injuries, suffering deep wounds to his stomach and hand, and has been admitted to JIMS Hospital in Kalaburagi.

The Yadgiri Town Police have registered a case and arrested Nirmal in connection with the stabbings. The incident highlights the rising tensions surrounding inter-caste marriages. *—Salar News*

Animal adoption scheme successful at Mysuru Zoo

MYSURU, 23 OCT

Mysuru Zoo's animal adoption drive continues to see strong support, with individuals and organisations sponsoring various species. Bengaluru's Vidur Kadidal adopted a Hoolock Gibbon for Rs 20,000, while Neejesh Shah, Rishik S, and Rashmi Itagi each contributed Rs 50,000 for a Black Panther. Nagraj CV adopted an Indian Leopard for Rs 50,000, and JSS Law College sponsored an Indian Fox and Sambar Deer for Rs 45,000. Winners Paradise, Chandana Consultancy, and KT Shanthala also joined in, earning the gratitude for their act. *—SALAR NEWS*

EXTENDED FOR 1ST TIME

5-day Kadlekai Parishe to start on 17 Nov

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

For the first time, the Kadlekai Parishe will last five days, an official release said. Starting 17 Nov, the City's grand festival, held at Basavanagudi, will continue last year's initiative of being "plastic free". Similarly, no tax will be collected from roadside vendors on Bull Temple Road.

The inauguration will be held at Sri Basavanna Temple, Basavanagudi at 10am in the presence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar. Last year's Kadlekai Parishe saw nearly 5 lakh people attend, the release, which was issued after a planning meeting presided over Transport & Muzrai Minister, Shri Ramalinga Reddy said. The Muzrai department was hopeful that even more people will attend.

The inauguration will begin with a special pooja performed by inviting 21 Basavannas (bulls) to the temple.

- There will be grand lighting decorations this year, extending to Bull Temple Road, Gandhi Bazaar, and NR Road for all five days, a statement said.

The inauguration will be held at Sri Basavanna Temple in Basavannagudi on 17 November *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

The statement said that "there will be grand lighting decorations this year, extending to Bull Temple Road, Gandhi Bazaar, and NR Road for all five days".

On the plastic free initiative, the statement said the State government would collaborate with NGOs for awareness campaigns aimed at shopkeepers and the public to help them understand not to use plastic.

Instead, the government will promote cloth bags under the slogan 'Come to the Parishe, Bring Your Own Bag', to help complete plastic ban.

CROWD MANAGEMENT

Emphasis will be placed on health, sanitation, and cleanliness during the festival.

Necessary arrangements will be made in coordination with the police department to prevent crowding and ensure safety, the statement said. The government will also repair street lights and deploy additional CCTV cameras at key locations, in addition to other safety measures. *—Salar News*

Kolar Deputy Commissioner MR Ravi and other district officials inspecting the dam site at Bethamangala on Thursday *PHOTO: SALAR*

KOLAR ADMIN VOWS TO REPAIR CRACKS IN BETHAMANGALA DAM

BETHAMANGALA, 23 OCT

Authorities in Kolar district will undertake repairing work on cracks that have appeared on the Bethamangala dam on Palar River in Kolar Gold Fields taluk, Deputy Commissioner MR Ravi said.

Ravi announced that a technical team will soon visit the site to assess the damage and initiate repair work to ensure the dam's structural safety.

The Palar River, originating from Nandi Hills in Chikkaballapur district, flows through several villages in Kolar before reaching Bethamangala, home to one of the district's largest tanks.

Once a major water source, the dam had suffered neglect and with declining rainfall over the years, Kolar district was deemed drought prone. However, recent heavy rains have filled it to capacity, causing several spills.

To prevent overcrowding, the district administration has imposed prohibitory orders around the Bethamangala, Kodihalli, and Ramasagara tanks until 29 October. *— Salar News*

Man rapes woman on pretext of marriage, booked

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

A 30-year-old man, Mohammad Ishaq, has been booked for allegedly exploiting a woman under the pretext of marriage. The sales executive from HSR Layout met him on Instagram last October, and they became intimate after he promised to marry her. In September 2025, she learned he was engaged to another woman. When confronted, Ishaq allegedly threatened her with violence. Police registered a case based on her complaint, and investigations into the matter are underway. *—PTI*

Cong wants AICC chief's removal over Bihar seat row

PATNA, 23 OCT

Disgruntled Congress leaders in Bihar staged a protest here on Thursday demanding immediate replacement, with "a political person", of AICC Bihar in-charge Krishna Allavaru for dispute over the party's candidates in Bihar Assembly polls. They accused him of being a "corporate agent" and "sleeper cell of the RSS". They wore black ribbons on their arms and carrying placards with the slogan 'ticket chor, Bihar chhod' (ticket thief, flee from Bihar). They accused Allavaru of damaging the party's prospects in polls through his mismanagement. "Tejashwi Yadav's chief ministerial candidature was announced today. Could it have not taken place a few weeks earlier?" asked Senior leader Anand Madhab, implying Allavaru deterred the issue. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Global artist fumes after her work is vandalised in Kochi

KOCHI, 23 OCT

Algerian-French artist Hanan Benammar, currently based in Oslo, has condemned the vandalism of her artworks by Kerala artist PH Hochiman at the Durbar Hall Art Gallery. Hochiman removed six printed linocut works entitled "Go Eat Your Dad," branding them obscene while live-streaming the act on Facebook. Benammar expressed her relief that no one was harmed. She highlighted the irony of her work being attacked for addressing "acts of silencing, moral policing, and censorship." Kerala Lalithakala Akademi Chairman Murali Cheeroth described it as an assault on artistic freedom and will file a complaint. Hochiman said, "It was not art but abusive language," and the works did not align with Kerala's culture. —*PTI*

Cong slams Centre over UK prof's deportation

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

The Congress party has condemned the Indian government's decision to deport Francesca Orsini, a London-based scholar of Hindi and professor emerita at SOAS, University of London, describing it as a "symptom of hostility towards independent scholarship." Orsini, who arrived from Hong Kong earlier this week, was denied entry at Indira Gandhi International Airport despite holding a valid five-year visa. She has been on a government 'Black List' since March, 2025 for alleged visa violations. Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh called the move politically motivated, praising Orsini's contribution to understanding India's cultural heritage. Historian Ramachandra Guha described the deportation as "insecure, paranoid, and stupid," highlighting the government's attitude academic freedom. —*PTI*

Kali idol damage in WB not politically motivated: Cops

KOLKATA, 23 OCT

Authorities in West Bengal confirmed the arrest of Narayan Halder for allegedly vandalising a Kali idol at a temple in Kakdwip's Suryanagar gram panchayat on Tuesday evening. South 24 Parganas SP Koteshwar Rao stated that the incident was "isolated and localised," with no political motivations involved. Halder, reportedly inebriated, confessed to the crime after his arrest. Following the incident, protests escalated, resulting in a blockade of the National Highway. Police secured the idol and maintained order, urging the public to refrain from spreading misinformation. The opposition has claimed the ruling TMC government is failing to safeguard Hindu sentiments, while TMC leaders praised the police's swift response to prevent communal tensions. —*PTI*

After rift, Cong, RJD try to mend fences

Cong says INDIA bloc is not one man show

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

With RJD's Tejashwi Yadav declared Mahagathbandhan chief ministerial face ahead of the Bihar Assembly polls, the Congress on Thursday asserted that the INDIA bloc is "not a one-man show" but a people's alliance built on mutual respect, inclusive representation, and the principle of shared power.

Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said those hoping to stoke divisions within the INDIA bloc must be disappointed.

"INDIA .... built on mutual respect, inclusive representation, and the principle of shared power," the Congress leader said.

Meanwhile, Yadav claimed that Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent statement on CM Nitish Kumar was proof that the BJP has decided not to let the JD(U) supremo remain in power after the Bihar assembly polls.

Yadav, sought to know why Shah is "hiding behind technicalities" this time.

He vowed to live up to the expectations of his partners, who have reposed their trust in him by declaring him the CM candidate.

However, Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor claimed that the projection of Yadav as the chief ministerial candidate will not sway public mood in favour of INDIA in upcoming polls.

He also said Yadav's promises like government employee status to contractual workers, a government job for all ring hollow. —*PTI*

Rahul Gandhi; Tejashwi Yadav PHOTO: PTI

It's 'Vikaas' versus 'Vinaash': Nadda

He calls Cong a parasite that destroys allies

AURANGABAD/HAJIPUR, 23 OCT

BJP Chief JP Nadda on Thursday said that the assembly election in Bihar is a fight between 'Vikaas' (development) of the NDA and 'Vinaash' (destruction) of the INDIA bloc.

Nadda lashed out at the Congress, accusing it of being a "parasitic party that finishes off its junior alliance partners".

The senior BJP leader attacked the RJD, saying the Lalu Prasad-led party stands for 'Rangdari' (extortion), 'Jungle raj' (anarchy) and 'Dadagiri' (intimidation).

Criticising the RJD's poll promise of providing a government job to every family in Bihar, Nadda sought to know from where would funds be generated to pay the salaries.

He also lambasted the RJD for giving a ticket to gangster-turned-politician, Osama Shahab for the Raghunathpur assembly constituency in the upcoming polls.

Nadda claimed that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar made Bihar free from 'jungleraj' in the last 20 years.

The NDA government increased Bihar's rail budget by almost 10 times by the Centre.

Besides, out of the total 44 Vande Bharat trains introduced by the Centre recently, 26 are for Bihar.

Special trains were increased to 12,000 this time to meet the passenger rush during Chhath festival, he added.

He alleged that abduction had become an industry during 'jungle raj' of the RJD and ransom amount used to be finalised at the then chief minister's residence.

He said that Congress leaders like Telangana CM Revanth Reddy says that the DNA of the people of southern state is better than that of residents of Bihar. —*PTI*

Union Minister and BJP National President JP Nadda speaks at a rally ahead of the Assembly polls, in Aurangabad district of Bihar PHOTO: PTI

81 nominations accepted for Jubilee Hills bypoll

HYDERABAD, 23 OCT

The nominations of 81 candidates for the Jubilee Hills Assembly bypoll here were found valid by the Election Commission during scrutiny, while papers of 130 candidates were rejected, officials said on Thursday. A total of 321 nominations were filed by 211 candidates..

The high-stakes bypoll to the constituency here would take place on 11 November.

This bypoll is necessitated due to the death of BRS MLA Maganti Gopinath in June.

The ruling Congress in Telangana announced V Naveen Yadav as its candidate, while the opposition BRS fielded Maganti Sunitha, widow of the late MLA. The BJP nominated Lankala Deepak Reddy.

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi had said the party will support Congress candidate Naveen Yadav.

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir will hold its first Rajya Sabha elections since becoming a Union Territory on Friday.

Four seats are up for grabs. NC's Chowdhury Mohammed Ramzan, Sajjad Kitchloo, Shammi Oberoi, and Imran Nabi Dar face BJP rivals. —*PTI*

INDIA leaders' absence from press meet poster sparks row

PATNA, 23 OCT

The photographs of top INDIA bloc leaders were missing from a banner at the venue of the much-awaited joint press conference of the Mahagathbandhan in Patna on Thursday, triggering a controversy.

The banner, the image of which has gone viral on social media, carried only a large photograph of RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav.

This is the first press conference of the Mahagathbandhan leaders amid the stalemate over seat-sharing arrangements among the INDIA bloc constituents for the assembly polls.

However, BJP's state media in-charge, Danish Iqbal, in a social media post, wrote, "...

The banner carried only a large image of Tejashwi Yadav PHOTO: ANI

Earlier, Rahul Gandhi did not consider Tejashwi as the alliance's face. Now, Tejashwi has removed Gandhi from the posters."

Independent candidate Pappu Yadav criticised the posters without Congress leader Gandhi's picture.

"Voting will be done on Gandhi's picture alone. The poster should have pictures of all three leaders of the alliance as it will send out the right message," said Yadav.

However, no RJD leaders were available for comments on the issue. —*PTI*

> **People will not forget the Jungle Raj in Bihar for another 100 years. No matter how hard the Opposition tries to hide its misdeeds, people will not forgive it**
>
> -Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

> **Yadav has promised to provide a government job to one person in 2.6 crore households, which will require about Rs 12 lakh crore. Bihar's total budget is around Rs 3 lakh crore. From where will he provide these jobs?**
>
> -Ravi Shankar Prasad, BJP leader

Bachke rehna re baba: Cong mocks PM for avoiding Don

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi not travelling to Malaysia for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit and set to participate virtually, the Congress on Thursday claimed that the reason for the PM not going there was that he doesn't want to be cornered by US President Donald Trump.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications **Jairam Ramesh** said posting messages in praise of President Trump on social media is one thing, but to be seen hobnobbing physically with the man who has claimed 53 times that he stopped Operation Sindoor and also claimed five times that India has promised to stop buying oil from Russia is "far too risky" for the PM.

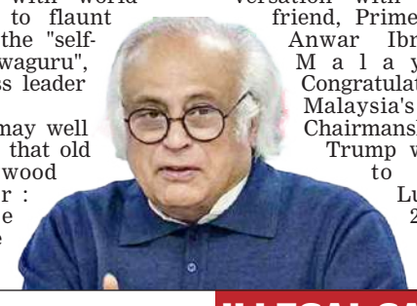
Prime Minister Modi will attend the summit virtually.

It means the loss of so many opportunities to hug and get photo ops with world leaders or to flaunt himself as the "self-styled Vishwaguru", the Congress leader said.

"The PM may well be recalling that old hit Bollywood number: Bachke rehna re baba, bachke rehna re," Ramesh said.

Modi is not travelling to Malaysia to participate in the meetings related to the ASEAN summit due to scheduling issues. The summit will be held in Kuala Lumpur from 26 October to 28 October.

Modi said, "Had a warm conversation with my dear friend, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia. Congratulated him on Malaysia's ASEAN Chairmanship and ..." Trump will travel to Kuala Lumpur on 26 October. —*PTI*



IAS officer's VR retirement stirs up Telangana politics

HYDERABAD, 23 OCT

The voluntary retirement of senior IAS officer **Syed Ali Murtaza Rizvi** has ignited a political controversy in Telangana, with the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) accusing the state government of "harassing" bureaucrats to engage in corrupt practices.

Rizvi, a 1999 batch officer with approximately a decade of service remaining, opted for voluntary retirement effective 31 October, a request that has been accepted by the state government. The reasons for his resignation remain unclear.

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao claimed that IAS and IPS officers are choosing to retire voluntarily due to pressure to commit unethical acts.

In a letter allegedly penned by Krishna Rao to the Chief Secretary, it was claimed that Rizvi was deliberately delaying a tendering process for high-security holograms meant for the liquor bottles. —*PTI*

Satya Pal's obit remark sparks row in J&K Assembly

SRINAGAR, 23 OCT

The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly witnessed a heated debate during its opening session on 23 October, sparked by obituary references to the late Satya Pal Malik, the former governor who passed away in August. NC MLA Bashir Veeri described Malik's role as controversial, prompting BJP member Sham Lal Sharma to demand his remarks be expunged.

The Speaker, Abdul Rahim Rather, declined the request but urged respect for the deceased.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah acknowledged Malik's intentions, stating he must have believed he was acting in the best interest.

"None of us is an angel sent by God. We have also made mistakes," he said.

Congress leader GA Mir called Malik "a good leader" who was "outspoken" and "popular", noting he struggled in his last days to reveal the truth. Rafiq Naik added, "We should not speak negatively while paying tributes".

BJP's Vikram Randhawa described Malik as talented, and the BJP credited him for the 'One Nation, One Constitution' achievement. The debate also touched on Malik's multifaceted career, with Choudhary suggesting an autobiography after retirement. The House observed a two-minute silence, and the session was adjourned till Monday.

The Speaker then adjourned the House till Monday, with Rajya Sabha elections scheduled for Friday and Saturday and Sunday being off days. —*PTI*

Cong MP says Kerala cop attacked him

KOZHIKODE, 23 OCT

Congress MP Shafi Parambil has accused a police officer of attacking him during a protest in Perambra on 10 October.

Parambil alleged that circle inspector Abilash David, who reportedly had previous disciplinary issues, was dismissed from police service for links with the land mafia and lapses in a rape case, but was later reinstated. "Just replaying the video is sufficient," he stated, while presenting evidence of the assault.

Parambil claimed, "These officers, who earlier worked with the SFI and CPI(M), now act as CPI(M) goondas within the police department." He further accused the government of misleading the public about cleansing the police force. Citing a Right to Information (RTI) response, he noted that records of David's reinstatement were not available.

The MP also alleged that the violence at the protest was politically motivated. —*PTI*

ILLEGAL CATTLE TRANSPORTATION

3 held for firing at 'Gau rakshak' in Hyd

HYDERABAD, 23 OCT

Three persons, including a cattle transporter, were on Thursday arrested in connection with the attempted murder case wherein a 28-year-old 'gau rakshak' or cow vigilante was shot at and injured near here.

The incident occurred in Ghatkesar on 22 October, when the prime accused, who is into the cattle transport business, opened fire at **B Prashanth Kumar** alias Sonu Singh, a 'Gau Rakshak Dal' activist.

Kumar was called to the location by one of his friends, where he had a discussion with the other accused.

The accused confronted him for exposing their "illegal" cattle transportation and the prime accused allegedly shot Kumar on the right side of the chest before all of them fled.

The police rushed to the spot and shifted Kumar to a hospital. A surgery was conducted and his condition is stable now.

The police found that the accused and Kumar had been in contact since July and had also met.

The investigation revealed the motive as retaliation on Kumar for allegedly causing an estimated Rs one crore loss to him by intercepting his vehicles. It was also found that there was a potential conflict arising from the victim's alleged demand for Rs 5 lakh to cease his activities.

Police seized one country made pistol and one car from the possession of the accused.

Security personnel detain a BJP activist during a protest near the DGP office, in Hyderabad, Telangana, on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

- The incident occurred in Ghatkesar on 22 October, when the prime accused, who is into the cattle transport business, opened fire at B Prashanth Kumar, a 'Gau Rakshak Dal' activist. Kumar then called his friend, who confronted the 'illegal' cow transporter

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar, BJP MP K Laxman, and other party leaders met Kumar at the hospital. The BJP will bear Kumar's medical expenses. Bandi criticised the Congress government, alleging that it is sheltering goons and rowdies. He said if the government doesn't take action against those slaughtering cows, Bajrang Dal activists will. —*PTI*

RIys allocates Rs 757 crore for fourth line in TN

CHENNAI, 23 OCT

The Ministry of Railways has approved a fourth railway line between Tambaram and Chengalpattu in Tamil Nadu at a cost of Rs 757.18 crore. Executed by Southern Railway, the project aims to ease severe congestion on the heavily used three-line section, which handles suburban, express and freight trains and faces capacity utilisation projected at 136 per cent. The upgrade will enhance connectivity for southern districts, benefiting daily commuters, and IT professionals while boosting freight movement to major industrial hubs such as the SIPCOT parks. The line will help segregate suburban and express services, improve operational efficiency, supporting traffic growth and regional development along the busy Chennai–Chengalpattu corridor. *—PTI*

PHOTO: Instagram

Bill Gates greets Tulsi in 'Kyunki Saas... 2' promo

MUMBAI, 23 OCT

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates made his Indian television debut with a cameo in the 'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi 2' promo, greeting Smriti Irani's Tulsi Virani with the iconic "Jai Shri Krishna".

In the video call scene, Tulsi welcomes Gates, who replies warmly, "Jai Shri Krishna, Tulsi Ji". The three-episode cameo highlights Gates' focus on maternal and newborn health and the charitable work of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Irani, former Women and Child Development minister, called the appearance historic, describing it as a "people's movement" promoting awareness and action on women and children's health. The episode airs on Star Plus at 10.30pm and streams on JioHotstar.*—PTI*

Kedarnath, Yamunotri shrines close for winter

RUDRAPRAYAG/ UTTARKASHI, 23 OCT

The sacred Himalayan shrines of Kedarnath and Yamunotri in Uttarakhand closed on Thursday for the six-month winter break. Despite freezing temperatures, around 10,000 devotees, along with Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, attended the Kedarnath ceremony, where Lord Shiva's flower-adorned palanquin was carried out to the tunes of an army band before beginning its journey to the Omkareshwar Temple in Ukhimath, the deity's winter abode. The Yamunotri shrine closed at 12.30pm, with Mother Yamuna's idol moved to her winter seat in Kharsali village. The closures mark the nearing end of this year's Char Dham Yatra, which saw millions of pilgrims despite monsoon disruptions. The Badrinath temple will be the last to close on 25 November, concluding the pilgrimage season.*—PTI*

Toddler drowns in rainwater puddle in Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI, 23 OCT

A two-year-and-10-month-old girl, Prenika Shri, tragically drowned in a rainwater puddle at a vacant plot near her home in Janani Nagar, Mangadu, Chengalpattu, police said on Thursday. On 22 October, around 2pm, Prenika and her mother, Priyadarshini, 23, had gone to sleep. When the mother woke at about 4.30pm, Prenika was missing. Neighbours joined the search and found her in the puddle. She was rushed to a nearby hospital but was declared dead on arrival. Mangadu Police confirmed a case has been registered and investigations are ongoing. Authorities are looking into the circumstances that led to the tragic accident. *—PTI*

Delhi residents wake up to persistent festive smog

City's air quality remains 'very poor' for third day in a row

Rush of visitors at the Kartavya Path overlooking the Rashtrapati Bhavan on a smoggy afternoon in New Delhi on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

A thick blanket of haze continued to hover over Delhi on Thursday morning, with the city's air quality remaining in the 'very poor' category for the third consecutive day after Deepavali.

The lingering smog and stagnant wind conditions prevented pollutants from dispersing, keeping visibility low and the air thick with suspended particles.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board, Anand Vihar recorded an alarming Air Quality Index (AQI) of 428, among the worst in the city, while Delhi's overall AQI stood at 326 at 9am. Only six of 48 monitoring stations reported readings below the 'very poor' range. Areas like Jahangirpuri, Wazirpur, and Rohini also touched the 'severe' bracket.

The Indian Meterological Department said the minimum temperature settled at 18.1°C, 3.7°C below normal. Calm surface winds of 4–6 kmph have slowed pollutant dispersion.

The toxic air wasn't limited to the national capital. In Haryana, towns such as Dharuhera (338) and Jind (305) reported 'very poor' AQI levels, while Punjab's Mandi Gobindgarh (274) and Ludhiana (251) stayed in the 'poor' range.

Kolkata hospitals see surge in respiratory cases

In Kolkata, hospitals witnessed a sharp rise in respiratory and cardiac complaints after Deepavali and Kali Puja celebrations. Pulmonologists reported a 15–25 per cent increase in outpatient visits for asthma, COPD, and throat irritation.Doctors warned that toxic gases from firecrackers and fine particulate matter were aggravating symptoms among children, the elderly, and pregnant women. *—PTI*

14 kids blinded due to 'Carbide gun' in MP

BHOPAL, 23 OCT

A deadly Deepavali trend has left scores of children across Madhya Pradesh hospitalised with severe eye injuries after using crude 'carbide guns,' homemade firecracker devices promoted on social media.

In three days, over 120 children were admitted across state hospitals, with 14 losing eyesight, officials said. In Bhopal alone, 60 people, mostly aged 8–14, were treated at Hamidia, JP, AIIMS, and Seva Sadan hospitals.

Doctors warned that the guns, made from plastic or tin pipes filled with calcium carbide and gunpowder, explode violently, releasing metal fragments and toxic vapours. "These are improvised explosives, not toys," said Dr Manish Sharma, CMHO, Hamidia Hospital.

Despite a statewide ban issued on 18 October, the devices were sold openly in markets and promoted online as part of a 'firecracker gun challenge.' Police have arrested six sellers and promised strict action. *— Agencies*

CHARGED IN 2 CASES

Sabarimala case: SIT apprehends Ex-TDB officer

T'PURAM, 23 OCT

- Accused Babu, suspended after the gold disappearance came to light, was taken into custody from his Changanassery residence and brought to the Crime Branch office in T'puram for questioning.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the missing gold from Sabarimala temple has arrested former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) administrative officer B Murari Babu, sources said on Thursday.

Babu, suspended after the gold disappearance came to light, was taken into custody from his Changanassery residence on Wednesday night and brought to the Crime Branch office in Thiruvananthapuram for questioning.

His relatives were informed of the arrest, recorded around 10 am Thursday, and later permitted to meet him. The SIT plans to produce him before the Judicial First Class Magistrate Court, Pathanamthitta, and is likely to seek custody for further interrogation.

Babu faces charges in two cases linked to the disappearance of gold from the Dwarapalaka (guardian deity) idols and the Sreekovil (sanctum sanctorum) door frames. Investigators said he had forwarded proposals by prime accused Unnikrishnan Potty in 2019 and again in 2025, misrepresenting the gold-clad plates as copper.

The TDB Vigilance report earlier raised suspicion of insider involvement, citing lapses by Babu and seven officials in handing over the plates to Potty. Acting on the Kerala High Court's direction, the SIT has already arrested Potty and continues to question officials suspected of aiding the removal of gold from the shrine's sacred structures. *—PTI*

Ranjan Pathak (first) and his gang members from Bihar, who were shot dead in Rohini area in Delhi on Thursday PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

4 Bihar gangsters shot dead in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

Four wanted criminals allegedly involved in multiple cases of murder in Bihar were killed in a shootout with a joint team of Delhi police and Bihar police at Bahadur Shah Marg in Delhi's Rohini area on Thursday.

The accused, identified as Ranjan Pathak, 25, Bimlesh Mahto alias Bimlesh Sahni, 25, Manish Pathak, 33, and Aman Thakur, 21, all residents of Bihar's Sitamarhi district, were part of the 'Sigma Gang.'

The accused, who were wanted for heinous crimes, including multiple murders and extortion, were reportedly planning to carry out criminal activities in Bihar ahead of the Assembly elections next month. They had committed a murder in Bihar after the model code of conduct came into place for the elections, police said.

Ranjan Pathak, the gang's kingpin carrying a bounty of Rs 25,000, was wanted in eight criminal cases. The accused had been in Delhi for the past several days.

During the operation, the accused allegedly opened fire at the police team, prompting retaliatory action.

They were rushed to a hospital, where doctors declared them dead. *—PTI*

Indian man faces charges for fireworks in Singapore

SINGAPORE, 23 OCT

A 39-year-old Indian-origin man, Dilip Kumar Nirmal Kumar, faced charges on Thursday for lighting fireworks during Diwali celebrations, despite Singapore's strict ban, local media reported.

The offence, under the Guns, Explosives and Weapons Control Act 2021, occurred along Carlisle Road last week. Authorities were alerted after a video of the fireworks surfaced online.

Dilip appeared in court via video link and is scheduled to reappear on 20 November.

Under Singapore law, unauthorised use of prohibited explosives calls for a maximum five-year jail term and a fine of up to SGD 100,000 (USD 77,000). *—PTI*

VIOLATION OF CUSTOMS

Kerala cop under fire for saying Prez violated Sabarimala norms

PALAKKAD, 23 OCT

- DySP claimed it was an inadvertent mistake as he had unknowingly set a forwarded message as WhatsApp status

The Palakkad district police chief has sought an explanation from a deputy superintendent of police (DySP) ranking officer regarding a WhatsApp status put up by him criticising President Droupadi Murmu's Sabarimala visit and claiming that it was in violation of various customs and high court orders.

The DySP, who had later deleted the status, claimed that it was an inadvertent mistake as he had unknowingly set a forwarded message as his WhatsApp status.

The status message reportedly stated that many of the customs related to pilgrimage to the Lord Ayyappa shrine were violated. It also questioned why the Congress and the BJP were not protesting against the same.

Meanwhile, President Murmu on Thursday unveiled the bust of former President, the late KR Narayanan, on the premises of Kerala Raj Bhavan in Kerala's Thiruvanan thapuram.

The bust was unveiled in the presence of former President Ram Nath Kovind, Bihar Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. *— PTI*

President Droupadi Murmu in the sanctum, not open to public PHOTO:X/RASHTRAPATIBHV

SpiceJet flight returns to Delhi after technical issue

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

A SpiceJet flight from Delhi to Patna was forced to return to the capital on Thursday morning due to a technical issue. The Boeing 737 aircraft made a safe landing, and passengers were disembarked normally. The airline did not disclose the number of passengers on board. In a statement, SpiceJet said, "On 23 October, 2025, flight SG 497 operating from Delhi to Patna returned to Delhi after take-off due to a technical issue. An alternate aircraft was arranged to accommodate the passengers, which is now en route to Patna." The incident caused a brief delay for travellers, but no injuries or safety concerns were reported. *—PTI*

Key accused in Rs 252-crore mephedrone case arrested

MUMBAI, 23 OCT

The Mumbai police have arrested a key accused in the Rs 252 crore mephedrone seizure case after his deportation from Dubai, officials said on Thursday.

Mohammed Salim Mohammed Suhail Shaikh, known as 'Lavish' for his extravagant lifestyle, was detained in Dubai following a Red Corner Notice and handed over to Indian authorities. He was brought to Mumbai on Wednesday and remanded in police custody till 30 October.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Police (Detection 1) Vishal Thakur, Shaikh was a core member of an international drug syndicate run by wanted accused Salim Dola. Operating from Dubai, Shaikh managed the procurement of raw materials, production and nationwide distribution of mephedrone through factories across Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana.

Accused Mohammed Salim Mohammed Suhail Shaikh being taken following his detention in Dubai PHOTO:SCREENGRAB

The crime branch had busted the syndicate last year by seizing drugs and raw materials worth Rs 252 crore from a unit in Sangli district. Shaikh is the third accused deported from the UAE in connection with the case.

So far, 15 people, including a woman, have been arrested. Investigators have also seized properties worth Rs 7 crore linked to the accused, and officials are exploring the possibility of invoking the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act. *—PTI*

'DUDE' IN CONTROVERSY

Ilaiyaraaja moves HC over Sony's unauthorised use of his content

CHENNAI, 23 OCT

- Earlier, Sony Music had submitted details of revenue earned from Ilaiyaraaja's works in a sealed cover, but the judge declined to accept it, noting that a related case was already pending before the Supreme Court

Music maestro Ilaiyaraaja has told the Madras High Court that two of his compositions were used in the recent Tamil film 'Dude,' starring Pradeep Ranganathan, without his consent.

His counsel made the submission on Wednesday before a single-judge bench hearing his plea against three music companies, including Sony Music Entertainment India Pvt. Ltd., over alleged unauthorised use of his songs. The court asked the veteran composer to file a separate petition regarding the latest complaint.

Earlier, Sony Music had submitted details of revenue earned from Ilaiyaraaja's works in a sealed cover, but the judge declined to accept it, noting that a related case was already pending before the Supreme Court. The apex court has sought Ilaiyaraaja's response to Sony Music's plea to transfer the copyright dispute from the Bombay High Court to the Madras High Court.

The bench posted the next hearing for 19 November, even as Ilaiyaraaja continues his long-standing battle for control over his musical catalogue, alleging repeated violations by production and music companies. *—PTI*

UP man's attempt to scare daughter takes tragic turn

SITAPUR, 23 OCT

A man has been arrested in Sitapur after his 11-year-old daughter died falling into a well. The incident occurred on 21 October in Jagannathpur village.

According to police, Shravan Kumar, who struggled with alcohol addiction, returned home drunk and asked his daughter, Lakshmi, for food. When she replied it was not ready, he attempted to scare her by hanging her near the well. Her hand slipped, and she fell in. Kumar jumped in to save her, but she could not be rescued. Neighbours used a rope to pull them out. Police have registered a case of culpable homicide. Kumar's wife died six years ago. *—PTI*

FESTIVAL OF SIBLINGHOOD

Children at an orphanage celebrate 'Bhai Dooj' in Jammu, on Thursday. This festival celebrates the bond between brothers and sisters. On this day, sisters perform a ritual by applying tilak on their brothers' foreheads and pray for their well-being, and in return, the brothers offer gifts as an expression of affection ***PHOTO: PTI***

The global race to stock up rare and critical minerals

Critical minerals are having a moment. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is at the White House to talk up Australia's rich deposits with President Donald Trump. China, which has a global stranglehold on rare earth elements, recently imposed new export restrictions, much to Trump's annoyance.

There's an era of global competition underway. Critical minerals are essential for manufacturing advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), electric vehicles and renewables. And governments everywhere are racing to secure a future supply.

Australia holds vast reserves of lithium, rare earths, cobalt and tungsten. This presents both a golden opportunity and a looming challenge.

WHAT ARE THEY?

Critical minerals are the raw materials used to manufacture objects like mobile phones, wind turbines and weapons. They underpin the technologies of the next industrial age, from lithium-ion batteries to F-35 fighter jets.

There's no single list of critical minerals, as countries have their own definitions of what is essential. The Australian government describes them as elements essential for modern technologies, the economy and national security, with supply chains vulnerable to geopolitical risk.

In Australia, the 31 minerals and rare earths defined as 'critical' include lithium, magnesium and zirconium. Rare earths are heavy metals used in electrical and magnetic components. These elements aren't scarce in the Earth's crust but occur in low concentrations, making them difficult and expensive to extract.

Geoscience Australia has mapped extensive deposits of critical minerals across the continent.

A BOOMING INDUSTRY

Australia's current Critical Minerals Strategy sets out a plan to move from simply mining and extracting these minerals to going further to refine, process and manufacture them.

This is backed by initiatives such as the $4 billion Critical Minerals Facility to support projects aligned with the strategy. This also includes a new 10 per cent production tax credit for onshore refining.

Together, these policies form a strong foundation for stimulating domestic mineral processing and investment. But their effectiveness will depend on how quickly they can translate into operational projects.

These are already emerging. Mining companies such as Arafura Rare Earths and Alpha HPA are developing chemical processing plants for magnet materials and high-purity alumina. The Critical Minerals Research and Development Hub (CSIRO) is pioneering new refining technologies that will enable domestic production of high-value materials. Australia's technical capability, long seen as lagging behind its geological advantage, is catching up. Yet most of Australia's critical minerals are still exported in raw form. Domestic processing and refining remain limited, while high energy costs and workforce shortages constrain growth.

Extracting critical minerals has a considerable environmental footprint. Producing one tonne of lithium generates 15–20 tonnes of CO_2 and consumes 77 tons of fresh water. The government needs to invest in sustainable technologies with minimal environmental impact.

A TIGHT GLOBAL RACE

The urgency to act has intensified amid escalating US–China trade tensions. In recent weeks, China imposed tighter export controls on rare-earth materials and magnet technology, forcing foreign firms to seek special approval to export items that contain even trace Chinese content.

In response, President Trump announced a 100 per cent tariff on Chinese imports from next month, a move designed to decouple US supply chains from Chinese dominance. This geopolitical shift presents both a risk and an opening for Australia. Washington is accelerating investment with Australian miners to diversify its supply chains away from China.

Global energy giants are turning their focus to critical minerals. With such deep-pocketed players entering the field, the pace toward commercial-scale extraction technologies is set to accelerate dramatically. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Prince Andrew's Epstein past haunts royal family

The latest allegations against Prince Andrew, in Virginia Giuffre's book Nobody's Girl, and reports that he and his wife, the Duchess of York, maintained contact with Jeffrey Epstein after his conviction for soliciting prostitution from a minor, present an ongoing problem for the royal family.

Giuffre, who died by suicide earlier this year, accused Andrew of sexually assaulting her on three occasions when she was 17. He has repeatedly denied the accusations.

King Charles moved swiftly, ordering his brother to forsake both his title of royal highness and surrender the other orders of nobility that are bestowed on children of the monarch, whether deserved or not.

The removal of royal titles from Prince Andrew – still his name – is hardly the first time the royals have been ruthless in pursuit of respectability. Like other royal families who have survived into the 21st century, they combine celebrity with a keen sense of self-preservation.

History suggests that when a scandal strikes, the royal instinct is to remove embarrassments from public view. This is more difficult when dealing with adults in an era of celebrity journalism. When Prince John, son of George V (who was king from 1910-1936), was found to be epileptic, he was carefully removed from public view and even from contact with his family. John died aged 14 and is largely forgotten.

More distressing was the revelation through a television documentary that two cousins of Queen Elizabeth II who had intellectual disabilities were institutionalised and ignored by the family, although the palace has denied this.

But these are minor examples compared to the scandals surrounding the abdication of Edward VIII, the refusal to allow Princess Margaret to marry Peter Townsend and the very public exile of Prince Harry to California. These scandals all revolved around unsuitable marriages.

One has to go back a century at least to find a royal prince whose alleged behaviour is so clearly reprehensible – and presumably criminal – as that of Andrew. That he has escaped prosecution is itself troubling, although he paid Guiffre a very considerable settlement while maintaining his total innocence.

Like Harry, Andrew can only be removed from the line of succession by an act of parliament, but he is, after all, only eighth in line to the throne. The king has clearly decided Andrew will no longer be part of the official royal family, unlike his other siblings, Anne and Edward.

Prince Andrew with 17-year-old Virginia Giuffre and Ghislaine Maxwell, an accomplice of Jeffrey Epstein ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

Perhaps luckily, the prince cannot be shipped off to become a colonial governor, as was the fate of the Duke of Windsor during the Second World War. Andrew will presumably be left to his own devices in the grounds of Windsor Castle, banished from family gatherings, which are always at the mercy of the paparazzi.

Hard questions may be asked about the cost to the British taxpayer of maintaining Andrew and Sarah, who live in a luxurious lodge and presumably are well cared for by servants.

Will this scandal affect the position of the royals? Almost certainly not: in Britain, as in Australia, the enthusiasm for abandoning constitutional monarchy appears to be declining. People can separate their outrage at Andrew from their respect for the monarchy, which is helped by the rise of populist autocrats such as US President Donald Trump.

He repeatedly choked me until I lost consciousness and took pleasure in seeing me fear for my life. Horrifically, the Prime Minister laughed when he hurt me and got more aroused when I begged him to stop

- Virginia Giuffre

RAPED BY A 'WELL-KNOWN PM'

Virginia Giuffre, one of the most prominent victims of Jeffrey Epstein's sex-trafficking network, has revealed harrowing details of abuse she allegedly suffered in her posthumous memoir, Nobody's Girl. Published six months after her suicide in Australia, the book recounts years of exploitation, including being trafficked to powerful men and subjected to repeated sexual abuse, CNN reported.

One of the most shocking allegations involves an unidentified man she described in US legal filings as a "well-known Prime Minister," while the UK edition refers to him as a "former minister." She detailed an incident on Epstein's Caribbean island at the age of 18, writing, "He repeatedly choked me until I lost consciousness and took pleasure in seeing me fear for my life. Horrifically, the Prime Minister laughed when he hurt me and got more aroused when I begged him to stop." Giuffre said she pleaded with Epstein not to send her back, but he refused, telling her coldly, "You'll get that sometimes."

The memoir also casts a spotlight on Andrew, whom Giuffre accused of sexually assaulting her as a teenager.

She alleged that Andrew's team tried to hire online trolls to harass her while she pursued a civil case against him in New York. Despite claiming he never met her, he reportedly paid millions to settle the case in 2022.

Facing mounting public scrutiny, Andrew recently gave up his royal titles, though he retains the title of "prince." Reports also suggest he maintained contact with Epstein months after claiming to have ended the friendship. *—Agencies*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Louvre thieves may dismantle & sell jewels or ransom them back

The spectacular heist of jewellery from the Louvre Museum in Paris has many people wondering how a theft like this could occur in broad daylight and what might happen to the items that were stolen from the museum.

In a matter of minutes, four thieves were able to enter through a first-floor window, break into secure glass displays, and take nine items of jewellery of immeasurable value.

Although an alarm was set off and museum guards were nearby, the thieves were able to escape quickly, using motorbikes to get away. They dropped one stolen item, a diamond and emerald-encrusted royal crown that had belonged to Empress Eugenie, Napoleon III's wife.

Their loot includes jewellery from French imperial times – brooches, necklaces, earrings and a tiara. The French prosecutor's office said the jewels were worth some 88 million euros, not including their historical value. The speed and professionalism of the heist show this was a well-planned crime, carried out by highly skilled perpetrators. That suggests they are linked to organised criminal groups.

Several media outlets reported a number of smaller thefts from French museums in recent weeks, including gold nuggets from the Paris Natural History Museum. There is no suggestion that these thefts were linked to the Louvre heist.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE LOOT?

The stolen jewellery includes well-known pieces that are easily recognisable. This will make it difficult, if not impossible, to sell them on the black market, even to well-heeled collectors and buyers.

This problem is well-known from other museum heists – such as the theft of the Canadian "Big Maple Leaf" giant gold coin from Berlin's Bode Museum in 2017 or the famous heist of 13 masterpieces by Degas, Manet and Rembrandt from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston in 1990. Those paintings have never been recovered. Instead, most experts believe one of two scenarios is more likely.

THE TWO SCENARIOS

In the first, the jewellery would be broken down into smaller pieces. Diamonds and other gemstones may be taken out, altered and then offered for sale. Silver and gold may be used to manufacture other pieces or may be sold separately.

This scenario would make it easy to conceal the origin of the pieces and sell them openly or online. The combined value, however, would be significantly lower compared to leaving the pieces intact. It is thus doubtful that the thieves targeted the specific jewellery for this purpose.

Scenario two would involve the thieves, or more likely the masterminds behind them, trying to sell the pieces back to the Louvre or trying to extort money from the French government for their return.

This may be done through brokers or other middlemen and may not happen for a while, until there is less public and media attention and the perpetrators feel sufficiently safe to contact – directly or indirectly – museum or state authorities.

Given the historical significance of the pieces, coupled with the embarrassment caused by the heist, the Louvre and the French government would be keen to have the pieces returned as swiftly as possible and might be willing to negotiate, albeit secretively.

Much of this remains, however, speculation. *—PTI*

THE STOLEN GOODS

Anti-clockwise from top: Empress Eugénie's diadem of pearls; Napoleon's second wife Empress Marie-Louise's Emerald necklace; Queen Marie-Amélie and Queen Hortense's necklace; Empress Eugénie's brooch; Empress Eugénie's reliquary brooch; Queen Marie-Amélie and Queen Hortense's crown; Napoleon's second wife Empress Marie-Louise Emerald earrings and Queen Marie-Amélie and Queen Hortense's earrings ***PHOTO: INTERPOL***

PHOTO: X

Sheikh Saleh made Saudi Arabia's grand mufti

DUBAI, 23 OCT

Saudi Arabia has appointed Sheikh Saleh bin Fawzan al-Fawzan, a prominent ultraconservative scholar, as the new grand mufti, the kingdom's highest religious authority. The announcement was made late on Wednesday by the state-run Saudi Press Agency, marking a decision by King Salman upon the recommendation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. 90-year-old Sheikh Saleh, born on 28 Sept, 1935, has faced criticism for controversial remarks, including a statement about Shiite Muslims, where he reportedly said, "They are brothers of Satan," and commented on slavery stating, "Slavery is a part of Islam. Slavery is part of jihad." He succeeded Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al-Sheikh, who held the position for 25 years. *—PTI*

After politician's murder, Lanka's Oppn dons black

COLOMBO, 23 OCT

Sri Lanka's main Opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) on Thursday wore black in Parliament to protest what it termed the government's insensitive response to the killing of one of its local council chairmen. An unidentified gunman entered Lasantha Wickramasekera, 22, on Tuesday and shot him dead. The incident marked the first political killing since the National People's Power government came to power a year ago. Public Security Minister Ananda Wijepala, who is in charge of the police force, told Parliament on Wednesday that Wickramasekera had a "criminal past" with links to the underworld. *—PTI*

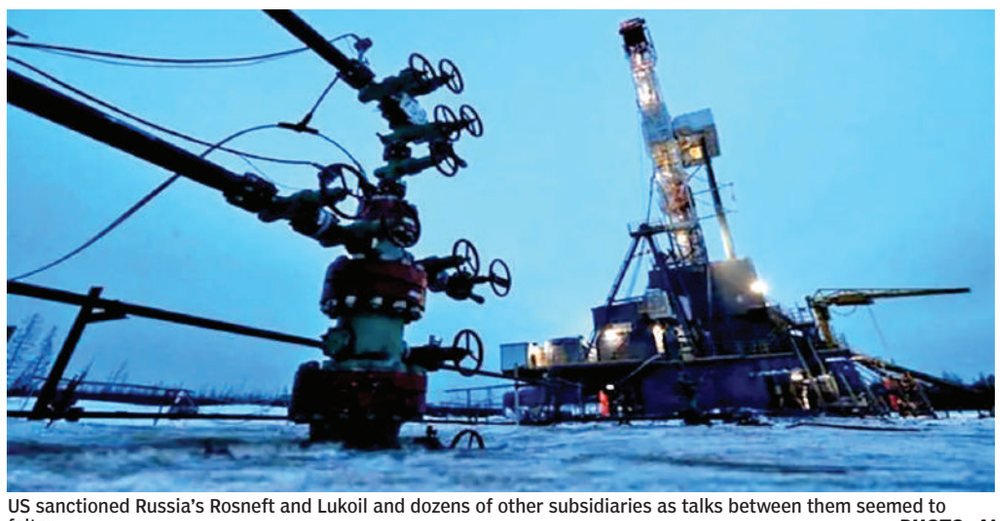
Vatican to return artefacts to native groups in Canada

VATICAN CITY, 23 OCT

The Vatican is set to return dozens of artefacts, including an Inuit kayak, to Indigenous groups in Canada as part of its reconciliation efforts regarding its role in suppressing Indigenous cultures. Following a 2022 meeting where Pope Francis apologised for the Church's involvement in Canada's residential schools, discussions accelerated on the restitution of items from the Vatican Museum's Anima Mundi collection. While the Vatican maintains these items were "gifts," critics question their free consent amid historical power imbalances. *—PTI*

US sanctions Russia's 2 biggest oil firms

Russia's Rosneft and Lukoil oil firms hit; EU sanctions Moscow's shadow fleet, LPGs



US sanctioned Russia's Rosneft and Lukoil and dozens of other subsidiaries as talks between them seemed to falter **PHOTO: AI**

WASHINGTON/ BRUSSELS, 23 OCT

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced new sanctions Wednesday against Russia's two biggest oil companies and blasted Moscow's refusal to end its "senseless war".

The sanctions against Rosneft and Lukoil, as well as dozens of subsidiaries, followed months of bipartisan pressure on President Donald Trump to hit Russia with harder sanctions on its oil industry.

"Now is the time to stop the killing and for an immediate ceasefire," Bessent said in a statement. Given Russian President Vladimir Putin's "refusal to end this senseless war, Treasury is sanctioning Russia's two largest oil companies that fund the Kremlin's war machine."

Bessent made the comments as NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte was in Washington for talks with Trump.

> **Every time I speak to Vladimir, I have good conversations and then they don't go anywhere.... I don't want to have a wasted meeting. I don't want to have a waste of time.**
>
>
>
> -Donald Trump, US President after Putin meeting was cancelled

The announcement came after Russian drones and missiles blasted sites across Ukraine, killing at least six people, including a woman and her two young daughters. At least 29 people, including five children, were wounded in Kyiv, which appeared to be the main target, authorities said.

The European Union also agreed on a new raft of sanctions against Russia targeting its shadow fleet of oil tankers and banning its imports of liquefied natural gas, the Danish EU Presidency announced Thursday.

He said that the new sanctions "will introduce new and comprehensive measures on oil and gas, the shadow fleet and Russia's financial sector," as EU leaders were gathering for a summit in Brussels.

Meanwhile, Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever insisted on Thursday that his European partners must share the risk of using billions of dollars in frozen Russian assets that are held in his country to help keep Ukraine's economy and war effort afloat in the coming years. The biggest tranche of those assets — some USD 225 billion worth — is held in Belgium, and the Belgian government is wary of using the money without firm guarantees from other EU countries.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday directed drills of the country's strategic nuclear forces. *—Agencies*

Virginia varsity strikes a deal

The University of Virginia has agreed to abide by White House guidance forbidding discrimination in admissions and hiring. The Justice Department began investigating the admissions and financial aid processes at the Charlottesville campus in April. The Virginia agreement announced Wednesday does not include a fine or monetary payment. Instead, the university agreed to follow the government's anti-discrimination criteria.

Kapur made Asia Assistant Secy

Indian-American author and security expert Paul Kapur has been officially sworn in as the new Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the US Department of State. His sworn in was the Bureau announced. Kapur will oversee America's engagements in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, & Uzbekistan.

The 8th and 9th strikes mark a departure for the US, which had previously attacked boats in the Caribbean **PHOTO: X**

US strikes 2 'drug boats' in 2 days in Pacific, kills 5

The US military launched two strikes against alleged drug-carrying vessels over two days in the Pacific Ocean, killing a total of five people. Its previous seven strikes were in the Caribbean.

Three people were killed and no US forces were harmed in the strike on Wednesday, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said, while two people were killed by strikes on another boat on Tuesday.

At least 37 people have been killed so far by US strikes on boats.

"Just as Al Qaeda waged war on our homeland, these cartels are waging war on our border and our people," Hegseth said on X.

Meanwhile, Venezuela has deployed 5,000 Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles in "key air defense positions," President Nicolas Maduro said. *—Salar News*

'LET SIKH ARMYMEN HAVE BEARDS'

Highlighting concerns for Sikh Americans serving in the military, a prominent US lawmaker has urged the Pentagon to reconsider a policy that calls for a blanket beard-shaving mandate among service members, emphasising that retaining uncut hair and a beard is a core tenet of their faith.

In a recent letter addressed to Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, Congressman Thomas R Suozzi acknowledged the importance of military professionalism and uniform standards but underlined that faith-based or medical accommodations should not be overlooked.

Hegseth recently issued a directive that military professionals should not have beards, saying the look did not suit the US Army.

Annexing West Bank will ruin peace: Vance, Rubio

JERUSALEM/ WASHINGTON/ THE HAGUE, 23 OCT

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President JD Vance warned that the Israeli Parliament (Knesset's) move toward annexing the West Bank could threaten President Donald Trump's plan to end the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza.

The Knesset passed a bill on Tuesday which allows Israeli law to be applied to the West Bank – a move tantamount to annexation of the territory that Palestinians need to build a sovereign state.

"The President (Donald Trump) has made clear that's not something we'd be supportive of right now," Rubio told reporters before departing for Israel. "We think there's potential for [it to be even] threatening to the peace deal."

Vance went further and called the move and "insult" to Trump.

Rubio is scheduled to arrive in Israel on Wednesday, remaining there until Saturday.

Medical team pay respects to the bodies of unidentified Palestinians returned from Israel outside Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis **PHOTO: PTI**

ICJ ORDERS ISRAEL TO LET AID INTO GAZA

The International Court of Justice, the UN's top court, rebuked Israel for blocking aid into Gaza.

ICJ ruled that Israel, as an occupying power, is obligated to work with UN agencies to facilitate humanitarian aid in Gaza.

"The court recalls Israel's obligation not to use starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare as an occupying power," the judge added.

The ICJ also said that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has not violated impartiality rules, and therefore should be supported in its relief efforts.

However, the advisory opinion given is non-binding.

Both Israel and the US called the ICJ biased and disregarded its ruling. *—Agencies*

China's 5-year plan looks at self reliance

BEIJING, 23 OCT

A key body of the ruling Chinese Communist Party reaffirmed the "core" leadership of President Xi Jinping as the head of the party and the powerful military, as it ended its four-day meeting on Thursday.

The meeting also backed a major purge of top military officials while endorsing a new 5-year plan to build a more resilient domestic market and achieve greater self-reliance amid US President Donald Trump's tariff war.

The 370-member strong body called the plenum, which met from Monday to Thursday, called on the party and country to unite behind Xi.

The 72-year-old leader is in his unprecedented third term in power, becoming the only Chinese leader after party founder Mao Zedong to do so.

Presently, China remains in a phase of development where strategic opportunities exist alongside risks and challenges, while uncertainties and unforeseen factors are rising, an official communique issued at the end of the meeting said. The country should achieve strength in science and technology and steer the development of new, quality productive forces.

It should build a robust domestic market and work faster to foster a new pattern of development, the communique said. *—PTI*

FACE US IF YOU'RE A MAN: TTP TO MUNIR

ISLAMABAD, 23 OCT

In a series of videos, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has issued stern threats to Pakistani Army Chief Asim Munir. A senior TTP figure identified by Pakistani officials as Commander Kazim says, "Face us if you are a man... Fight us if you have had your mother's milk."

This comes after Pakistan and Afghanistan reached a ceasefire agreement after Islamabad launched strikes on Kabul claiming that the TTP was using Afghan soil as a launchpad for strikes.

Pakistan also resumed Afghan transit trade in a phased manner on Thursday. *—Salar News with agencies*

Mamdani faces more racism for eating with hands

NEW YORK, 23 OCT

Democrat New York City mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani has been receiving racist backlash again for eating with his hands.

Mamdani, the son of film-maker Mira Nair, has recently been campaigning by meeting several sections of society, including the Indian diaspora in restaurants and other such events. During one such event, he was photographed eating biriyani with his hands, irking racists.

"Jackunheard," one X user fumed. Another called the act "barbaric," while one person questioned "Who eats rice with their hands?"

Louvre director offers to quit after 'terrible failure,' admits camera lapses

PARIS, 23 OCT

The Louvre's director on Wednesday acknowledged a "terrible failure" at the Paris tourist attraction after a daylight crown jewel heist over the weekend, and said that she offered to resign but it was refused.

The world's most-visited museum reopened earlier in the day to long lines beneath its landmark glass pyramid for the first time since one of the highest-profile museum thefts of the century stunned the world with its audacity and scale.

In testimony to the French Senate, Louvre director Laurence des Cars said that the museum had a shortage of security cameras outside the monument and other "weaknesses" exposed by Sunday's theft.

She testified to a Senate committee that she submitted her resignation, but that the Culture Minister refused to accept it.

"We are experiencing a terrible failure at the Louvre, which I take my share of responsibility in," she said.

The robbers entered the Louvre by climbing a ladder; Louvre director Laurence des Cars **PHOTO: X**

The thieves slipped in and out, making off with eight pieces from France's Crown Jewels — a cultural wound that some compared to the burning of Notre Dame Cathedral in 2019.

The theft — steps away from the Mona Lisa and valued at more than $100 million — has put embattled President Emmanuel Macron, Culture Minister Rachida Dati, des Cars and others under new scrutiny. Protests recently erupted over the government's policies. *—PTI*

ALLEGED ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT

Indian trucker kills 3 in US, cops say he was high

CALIFORNIA, 23 OCT

A 21-year-old Indian man, Jashanpreet Singh, has been arrested following a devastating semi-truck crash on a Southern California freeway that led to the deaths of three individuals. Singh has been charged with gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated after his Freightliner tractor-trailer collided with slow-moving traffic in San Bernardino County.

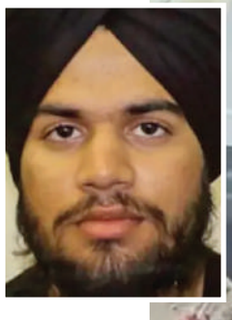
The deadly crash, which took place on the I-10 Freeway, was captured on the dashcam of Singh's Freightliner tractor-trailer.

"He was driving under the influence of drugs," stated CHP Officer Rodrigo Jimenez. His toxicology tests confirmed this impairment.

Police say Singh never hit the brakes before slamming into the traffic jam, Fox News reported.

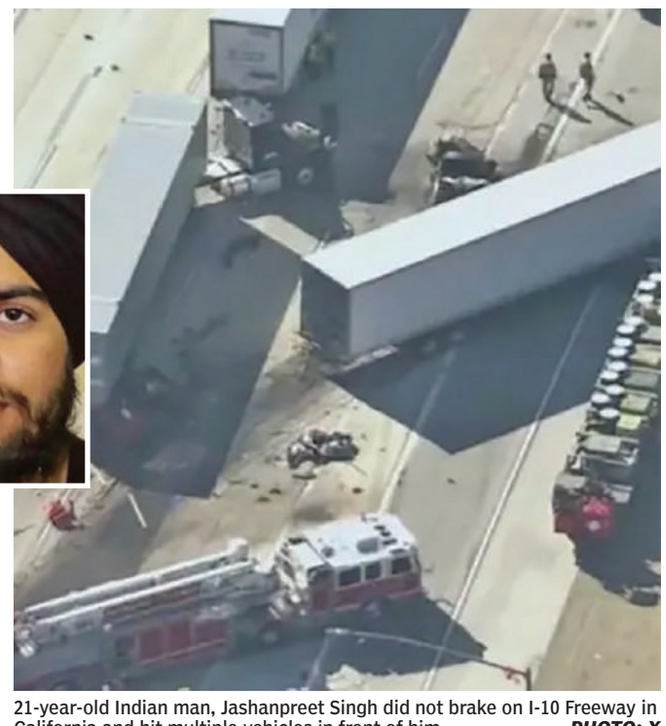
Reports indicate that Singh entered the US illegally in 2022 and had previously encountered Border Patrol agents in California's El Centro Sector but was released under the Biden administration's "alternatives to detention" policy.

The tragic collision was recorded on dashcam footage, revealing that Singh did not apply the brakes prior to the impact.



Homeland Security confirmed Singh's unlawful immigration status, and ICE has issued an immigration detainer.

This accident comes months after Indian national Harjinder Singh was accused of causing a fatal collision in Fort Pierce, Florida, that left three people dead. Harjinder, who had also illegally entered the US in 2018, reportedly failed both English and road-sign tests before obtaining a commercial driver's licence in California. *—Agencies*



21-year-old Indian man, Jashanpreet Singh did not brake on I-10 Freeway in California and hit multiple vehicles in front of him **PHOTO: X**

India's GDP growth at 6.8% in FY26: Deloitte India

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

Deloitte India has projected India's economy to grow between 6.7 per cent and 6.9 per cent in the current fiscal year, driven by strong domestic demand, policy reforms, and steady inflation. The 'India Economic Outlook' report estimates average growth at 6.8 per cent, up by 0.3 per cent points from its previous forecast, in line with the RBI's estimate. Economist Rumki Majumdar said festive season consumption and a rebound in private investments would support growth. However, global headwinds, high core inflation, and trade uncertainties with US and EU pose risks. Deloitte added that empowering the MSME sector will be key to sustaining India's growth momentum amid shifting global conditions. —*PTI*

Gold, silver futures rebound after steep sell-off

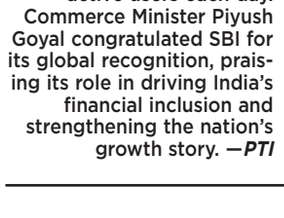
NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

Gold and silver futures recovered on Thursday after witnessing a sharp sell-off in the previous sessions, as traders indulged in value buying amid easing global tensions and improving risk sentiment. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for December delivery increased by Rs 1,800, or 1.48 per cent, to Rs 1,23,657 per 10g in a business turnover of 13,158 lots. Silver futures also rebounded after facing a sharp sell-off in the previous sessions, by surging Rs 2,727, or 1.87 per cent, to Rs 1,48,285 per kilogram in 20,868 lots. The sharp fall also followed gains in the USD and fading safe-haven demand amid improving global risk sentiment, analysts said. —*PTI*

Rupee rises by 7P, closes at 87.86 against USD

MUMBAI, 23 OCT

The rupee appreciated by seven paise to close at 87.86 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, supported by a positive trend in domestic equities and risk-on sentiments amid optimism about the US-India trade deal. Forex traders said the rupee closed on a positive note as there is a growing buzz that India and the US are inching closer to finalizing a long-awaited trade deal. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 87.80 and touched an intraday low of 87.96 before settling at 87.86 (provisional), registering a rise of 7 paise from its previous close. Foreign exchange markets were closed on Tuesday and Wednesday due to Diwali and Diwali Balipratipada, respectively. —*PTI*



SBI wins award for 'World's Best Consumer Bank'

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

State Bank of India (SBI) has been named the World's Best Consumer Bank 2025 and Best Bank in India 2025 by New York-based Global Finance magazine at the World Bank/IMF annual meetings. The award received for the titles 'World's Best Consumer Bank 2025' and 'Best Bank in India 2025.' The recognition highlights SBI's leadership in innovation, financial inclusion, and digital banking. Chairman CS Setty said that the bank's "Digital First, Consumer First" approach enables it to serve over 520 million customers, adding around 65,000 new users daily through its flagship mobile app, which has 10 million active users each day. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal congratulated SBI for its global recognition, praising its role in driving India's financial inclusion and strengthening the nation's growth story. —*PTI*

Meta fires 600 AI lab workers after billion dollar hiring

CALIFORNIA, 23 OCT

Months after investing heavily in building its "AI Superintelligence" team, Meta is now trimming the same workforce. Around 600 employees from Meta's AI division are being laid off this week, according to a Bloomberg report citing an internal memo. The move follows an earlier aggressive hiring spree, during which Meta recruited top talent from rivals including Apple, OpenAI, and Anthropic.

The layoffs were announced internally on 22 October. Chief AI Officer Alexandr Wang said the decision is aimed at "increasing efficiency and reducing bureaucracy." Wang explained that a smaller team would require fewer conversations to reach decisions, with each individual taking on more responsibility.

Interestingly, Meta's newly established TBD Lab — which includes many of its highest-paid recruits — is unaffected by the cuts. The company has encouraged affected staff to apply for roles in other departments and confirmed that selective hiring for critical AI positions will continue.

The restructuring comes after reports that Meta froze AI hiring in August, which the company later described as routine organisational planning. The moves underscore the high stakes of Meta's AI ambitions, which have come at significant cost. The company reportedly invested Rs 1.2 lakh crore in Scale AI, a data labeling startup led by Wang, to accelerate its super intelligence efforts. Some AI experts were reportedly offered packages as high as Rs 800 crore.

Meta insists the layoffs are part of a restructuring plan rather than a retreat from its AI ambitions. Despite the reduction in staff, the company remains committed to advancing its AI projects and continuing its multibillion-dollar investments in the sector. —*Agencies*

US sanctions on Russian firms hit Nayara, Reliance

Indian refiners such as IOC, BPCL not in immediate danger

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

The latest US sanctions targeting Russia's two largest oil companies, Rosneft and Lukoil, have put Indian refiners, particularly Nayara Energy, in a tight spot. Nayara, in which Rosneft holds a 49.13 per cent stake, has been heavily reliant on Russian crude since the EU imposed sanctions on it in July.

The company, which runs a 20-million-tonne-a-year refinery in Vadinar, Gujarat, has already been sanctioned by the EU and may now have to recalibrate its purchases. Nayara did not respond to requests for comment. State-owned refiners such as Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum (BPCL), Hindustan Petroleum (HPCL), and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) are not in immediate danger.

They have no direct contracts with Rosneft or Lukoil and typically buy Russian crude through intermediaries — mostly European, Dubai, or Singapore-based traders who remain outside the sanctions net. These purchases can continue for now, although compliance checks are underway to ensure no Rosneft-linked contracts slip through.

Nayara has been heavily reliant on Russian crude since the EU imposed sanctions on it in July *PHOTO: NAYARA ENERGY*

Higher tariffs may cause 10–12% decline in India's leather exports

Indian leather and allied product companies are set to witness a 10–12 per cent decline in revenues this fiscal year due to steep 50 per cent import tariffs imposed by US, Crisil Ratings said. The US, which accounts for about 22 per cent of India's leather exports, introduced a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff in early August and an additional 25 per cent penalty linked to India's purchase of Russian oil.

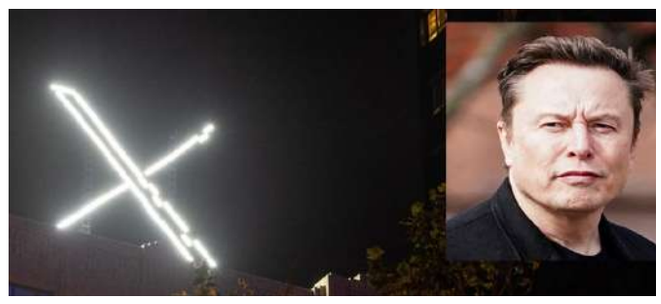
The Indian government has maintained that its oil imports from Russia are legal, noting that US officials had previously encouraged such purchases to stabilise global prices. New Delhi called US President Donald Trump's decision to double tariffs on Indian goods "unfair, unjustified, and unreasonable," insisting its crude buys are "based on market factors." Despite the sanctions, market reaction has been muted. "If sanctions were watertight, oil prices would have risen by at least $5–10 per barrel," said an industry source. Prices rose by just $2, indicating traders expect Russian oil to keep flowing through new channels, possibly via Dubai-registered intermediaries. Trump's claim that India has agreed to stop buying Russian oil finds no backing in Delhi.

However, EU rules coming into effect in January 2026, banning imports of fuel refined from Russian oil, may indirectly reduce Indian refiners' dependence. Reliance Industries and MRPL, will have to adjust sourcing, while Nayara has already halted exports to EU. With these shifts, Russian crude inflows into India are expected to decline early next year — a scenario Washington may be using as diplomatic leverage.

INDIA'S CRUDE IMPORT COSTS RISES

India's average crude import cost has increased sharply versus the Dubai benchmark, in FY26 so far, even as the share of Russian crude in the country has declined, said Kotak Institutional Equities. —*Agencies*

'PREVENT MISUSE OF AUTHORITY'



Fewer Indian officials allowed to remove X contents

BENGALURU, 23 OCT

The Indian government has curtailed the number of officials authorised to order online content removals, marking a significant policy revision after months of friction with Elon Musk's social media platform, X.

Under the amended framework, only senior bureaucrats of joint secretary rank or higher, and police officers serving as deputy inspector general or above, may issue takedown directives. The decision replaces earlier provisions that permitted thousands of officials to act independently. The new system will come into effect on 15 November.

Officials said the updated rules are intended to strengthen accountability and prevent misuse of content-blocking powers. Each order must now be accompanied by a "reasoned intimation" specifying the relevant law, the nature of the alleged offence, and the digital address of the targeted material. These directives will also be reviewed monthly by a secretary-level officer to ensure compliance and justification.

The reform follows a legal dispute in which X challenged India's sweeping takedown policy, arguing it undermined freedom of expression. The Karnataka High Court dismissed the petition in September.

Legal commentators describe the revised policy as a partial retreat from the government's earlier, broader powers, though concerns remain over the continued administrative burden and the limited avenues for appeal. —*Agencies*

Markets climb for 6th day; hit 52-week high levels

MUMBAI, 23 OCT

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended marginally higher on Thursday, helped by robust buying in IT and tech stocks amid growing optimism on the US-India trade deal front.

After hitting a 52-week high, indices reversed most of their intra-day gains on fag-end profit-taking after sentiment turned cautious amid concerns over US sanctions against Russia's two largest oil companies.

Besides, an over one per cent decline in heavyweight Reliance Industries also pulled the markets lower.

Rising for the sixth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 130.06 points or 0.15 per cent to settle at 84,556.40. During the day, it jumped 863.72 points or 1.02 per cent to 85,290.06.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended 22.80 points or 0.09 per cent higher at 25,891.40.

FIIs are gradually returning to Indian markets, encouraged by expectations of earnings rebound in H2 FY26 supported by festive demand, tax benefits and GST reductions, he added.

From the Sensex firms, Infosys climbed 3.86 per cent. HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan and Tech Mahindra were also among the gainers. However, Eternal, UltraTech Cement, Bharti Airtel and Adani Ports were among the laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.42 per cent, and the midcap index dipped 0.15 per cent. —*PTI*

HUL Q2 profit rises by 3.8% despite flat volumes

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) posted a 3.8 per cent rise in consolidated net profit for the September quarter of FY26, reaching Rs 2,694 crore, compared with Rs 2,595 crore a year earlier.

Revenue grew 2.1 per cent to Rs 16,034 crore, although underlying volume growth remained flat due to the temporary impact of GST changes and extended monsoon conditions across several regions, which affected consumer demand and supply chain movement. The firm said profit growth was aided by a one-off tax gain of Rs 184 crore following the resolution of earlier tax matters between Indian and UK. Segment-wise, Beauty & Wellbeing led with a 9 per cent rise in revenue, while Home Care declined slightly and Personal Care remained largely unchanged. —*PTI*

OMC'S UNDER FIRE

New ethanol tender leaves over 350 distilleries in uncertainty

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

More than 350 operational distilleries across the country are facing an uncertain future due to inadequate procurement orders under the latest ethanol tender, with industry bodies flagging concerns over the allocation methodology that favours new entrants over existing units.

The Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26 tender issued by Oil Marketing Companies (OMC) has come under fire from stakeholders who allege that the allocation criteria is creating artificial imbalances, while sidelining distilleries set up under prior government commitments.

According to the tender document (#1000442332), zones where offers from local distilleries fall short of requirements are classified as deficit zones, with all local offers considered full for allocation.

However, industry representatives say this approach ignores surplus capacity in neighbouring states, much of which was established under Long-Term Offtake Agreements and Expression of Interest initiatives promoted by OMCs themselves.

"A more holistic procurement model is needed -- one that considers surplus availability across states, pre-existing capacities and investments, prior understandings and commitments made with distilleries," Grain Ethanol Manufacturers Association President CK Jain said.

The published allocations indicate that at least 350 distilleries have been deprived of adequate orders, raising questions about the fairness of the procurement process.

Industry bodies are now calling for urgent policy intervention to ensure that existing operational capacity is utilized optimally before encouraging new investments in deficit zones. The original goals of the ethanol programme included addressing regional deficits through localized production, reducing transport costs, and supporting farmers, but the current implementation appears to be creating distortions, they said. —*PTI*

World Bank may release $200M for Amaravati by Dec

AMARAVATI, 23 OCT

The World Bank is expected to release the second tranche of USD 200 million for the Amaravati Capital City Phase-I development by the end of this year, a senior Andhra Pradesh government official has confirmed.

Both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have pledged USD 800 million each—totalling USD 1.6 billion (Rs 13,600 crore)—towards the project. The Central government has committed an additional Rs 1,400 crore as part of its Rs 15,000 crore support for Phase-I.

The World Bank has already disbursed USD 207 million, of which around half has been utilised. "We expect to claim the next installment before December," said S Suresh Kumar, Principal Secretary (Municipal Administration and Urban Development).

The World Bank, in its latest update, rated implementation progress as satisfactory, highlighting the start of construction and the establishment of an Environmental and Social Management Unit. —*PTI*

EFFECTIVE FROM NOVEMBER

Bank customers can now add up to 4 nominees

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

Beginning next month, a bank customer can opt for up to four nominees in her or his account with a view to ensure uniformity, and efficiency in claim settlement across the banking system.

The key provisions relating to Nomination under the Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025 will come into effect from 1 November, 2025, a finance ministry statement said on Thursday.

The Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025 was notified on 15 April, 2025.

It contains a total of 19 amendments across five legislations — the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, Banking Regulation Act, 1949, State Bank of India Act, 1955 and Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970 and 1980.

As per the amendments, it said, customers may nominate up to four persons, either simultaneously or successively, thereby simplifying claim settlement for depositors and their nominees.

Depositors may opt for either simultaneous or successive nominations, as per their preference, it said.

Individuals maintaining deposits, articles in safe custody, or lockers may specify up to four nominees, where the next nominee becomes operative only upon the death of the nominee placed higher, ensuring continuity in settlement and clarity of succession, it said.

The Banking Companies (Nomination) Rules, 2025, detailing the procedure and prescribed forms for making, cancelling, or specifying multiple nominations, will be published in due course to operationalise these provisions uniformly across all banks. —*PTI*

DGCA approves private pilot evaluation centres

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has announced that private aeromedical evaluation centres will now be authorised to conduct civil aviation medical assessments, effective from 15 November, 2025. The move ends the longstanding practice of pilots undergoing routine medicals exclusively at Indian Air Force (IAF) facilities.

The decision has been welcomed by the Airline Pilots' Association of India (ALPA India), describing it as a significant step towards aligning India with international standards. ALPA had long campaigned for separating military and civil medical evaluation frameworks, highlighting issues such as logistical inconvenience, lack of standardisation, and non-transparent procedures at IAF centres.

Previously, pilots were required to undergo every fifth medical at the IAF, sometimes leading to the unwarranted grounding of fit personnel. The new system, using modern civilian infrastructure, is expected to streamline assessments, improve efficiency, and enhance compliance with global norms. —*PTI*

Rohit's 73 in vain as India lose ODI series

Virat Kohli waves goodbye to Adelaide crowd after getting consecutive ducks

ADELAIDE, 23 OCT

Rohit Sharma's defiant 73 went in vain as India surrendered the three-match ODI series against Australia after losing the second game by two wickets here on Thursday, a setback that will reignite the debate on proven match-winner Kuldeep Yadav's omission from the playing XI.

Under pressure, Rohit mixed grit with grace in a 97-ball knock on a spicy track that formed the cornerstone of India's total of 264 for 9, which was at least 25 runs short of what should have been a par score. In reply, Australia struggled against Indian spinners, but with Nitish Reddy being shoe-horned as a multi-skilled player instead of a genuine match-winner in Kuldeep, the visitors paid the price in a close situation.

Cooper Connolly (61 not out off 53 balls) and Mitchell Owen (36 off 23 balls), two cricketers who are also appearing for IPL auditions, flayed the pacers and spinners alike as Australia survived a late collapse to canter home in 46.2 overs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. At the other end, Washington Sundar (2/37) had an impatient Alex Carey (9) trying to sweep and getting bowled in the process. However, once the burly Mitchell Owen came into the scene, he smashed the daylights out of Harshit Rana (2/59 in 8 overs) to tilt the game decisively in favor of Australia.

Gill rues missed chances in Adelaide game after losing series
PHOTO: PTI

Virat Kohli waved goodbye to the Adelaide crowd on Thursday after getting dismissed for consecutive ducks for the first time in ODIs, which gave rise to retirement talks. Is it the beginning of the end for one of the most glorious chapters in the history of Indian cricket? After registering consecutive ducks for the first time in his international career, Virat Kohli lifted his right hand, gave a quiet little wave at the crowd, almost to say goodbye.

Rohit Sharma
PHOTO: PTI

Adelaide Oval has been his fortress. It is not the first time that Kohli scored consecutive ducks, but it seems that the intensity that added to his legend has diminished considerably.

He has scored the most runs (975) by a visiting batter (across formats) at this venue. He received a rousing reception when he walked out to bat, and although the cheers did not match it, the crowd did give him an ovation. Kohli, as uncharacteristic as it may sound, acknowledged it by waving goodbye.

Brief Scores:
India: 264/9; 50 overs (Rohit Sharma 73, Shreyas 61, Axar Patel 44; Zampa 4/60, Xavier Bartlett 3/39) lost to Australia 265/8; 46.2 overs (Matthew Short 74, Cooper Washington Sundar 2/37, Arshdeep Singh 2/41, Harshit Rana 2/59) by two wickets. —*PTI*

Matthew Short
PHOTO: PTI

Virat Kohli's disastrous run continues, dismissed for a duck in the 2nd ODI against Australia
PHOTO: PTI

England wrap up T20 series after Eden Park washout

AUCKLAND, 23 OCT

England won its three-match Twenty20 series against New Zealand 1-0 on Thursday after the third match at Eden Park was washed out after only 3.4 overs. The first match at Hagley Oval in Christchurch was also rained out, and England won the second game at the same venue on Monday by 65 runs. Rain forced players from the field on Thursday for the first time after just three balls had been bowled. When play resumed after 80 minutes, the match had been reduced to 14 overs per side. New Zealand faced another 3.1 overs before rain returned, and the players left the field again with the host team on 38-1. A final effort was made to restart the match at 10 pm local time with eight overs per side. But just as the players were about to take the field, a final heavy shower ended the match.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Marquez ends season after injury in Indonesia

INDONESIA, 23 OCT

Newly-crowned MotoGP champion Marc Marquez has brought his triumphant season to an early close after suffering a collarbone injury at the Indonesian Grand Prix earlier this month, his team Ducati said on Thursday. A week after winning his seventh premier class title at the Japanese Grand Prix, Marquez suffered the injury in a collision with Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi on the opening lap of the Indonesian Grand Prix. The 32-year-old Spaniard was expected to return for the last two rounds of the season in Portugal and Valencia. Although the medical team confirmed the evolution of Marquez's injury is proceeding normally, Ducati said his season is over as he will have to spend four weeks with his arm completely immobilised before beginning rehabilitation.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

AYG: Ranjana bags silver in 5,000m walk

RIFFA, 23 OCT

Ranjana Yadav clinched a silver medal in the girls' 5000m walk at the Asian Youth Games at the Bahrain National Stadium, here on Thursday. The Indian clocked 23 minutes 25.88 seconds to finish behind China's Liu Shiyi, who took gold in 24:15.27. Korea's Jeong Chaeyeon bagged bronze in 25:26.93. This was India's first medal in athletics at the AYG, taking the country's overall tally to two silver and four bronze medals. India has won one silver and two bronze in kurash, and two bronze in taekwondo. —*PTI*

Bangladesh ends wait for ODI series victory

MIRPUR, 23 OCT

The Bangladesh spinners were responsible for all 10 wickets as their team thrashed West Indies by 179 runs in the third and final ODI to take the series 2-1 on Thursday. The dominant victory, its second-largest overall and biggest ever against the Caribbean side, helped Bangladesh claim its first ODI series triumph since March 2024. In between, it has lost four such encounters. Leg-spinner Rishad Hossain capped a successful spell with 3-54, taking his wicket-tally to 12, the highest by a Bangladesh spinner in an ODI series. West Indies was bowled out for 117 in 30.1 overs.—*PTI*

LEVEL TWO-TEST SERIES

SA thrashes Pak by 8 wickets

RAWALPINDI, 23 OCT

South Africa thrashed Pakistan by eight wickets Thursday to level the two-test cricket series, with off-spinner Simon Harmer playing a crucial role with a six-wicket haul.

Pakistan opened the series with a 93-run victory inside four days at Lahore last week, but Harmer flipped the script on another spinning wicket at Rawalpindi. He snared 6-50 to dismiss Pakistan for 138 on Day 4.

That set South Africa a victory target of 68 runs, and the World Test Championship winners eased to 73-2 in 12.3 overs.

Harmer and left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj, who missed the first test due to injury, scripted South Africa's victory with 17 wickets between them in the second test.

South Africa skipper Aiden Markram made a brisk 42 off 45 balls with eight fours to power the chase before he was trapped lbw by Noman Ali when his team needed only four runs for victory.

Tristan Stubbs, one of the four half-century makers in South Africa's first innings of 404, was out for a duck when he edged Noman to slip, before Ryan Rickelton (25 not out) smashed Sajid Khan for six to secure the win just before the scheduled lunch interval.

Simon Harmer is swamped by his team-mates after completing his maiden Test six-for 50
PHOTO: PTI

Harmer became only the third South African bowler to reach the 1,000-wicket milestone in first-class cricket when he had Noman caught behind, and Pakistan's second innings collapsed in just over an hour.

Babar, who hasn't scored a test century since December 2022, went for a review, but the television replays indicated the ball didn't make any contact with the bat before hitting the pads flush in front of the wickets.

Harmer then got an inside edge off Rizwan's bat, and the ball popped to Tony de Zorzi close to the wicket as Pakistan lost two key wickets inside the first 20 minutes and led by just 34 runs.

South Africa 404 (Muthusamy 89*, Stubbs 76, Rabada 71, Asif 6-79) and 73 for 2 (Markram 42, Rickelton 25*) beat Pakistan 333 (Masood 87, Shakeel 66, Maharaj 7-102) and 138 (Babar 50, Harmer 6-50) by eight wickets. —*PTI*

Babar, Naseem recalled in Pakistan's T20 squad

LAHORE, 23 OCT

Former captain Babar Azam and pacer Naseem Shah have been recalled to Pakistan's T20 squad for the upcoming home assignment against South Africa and a tri-Series involving Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe next month.

Babar, after being sidelined from the T20 format since December last year, is back with young hard-hitter Abdul Samad and Naseem. The T20I series between Pakistan and South Africa will be played in Rawalpindi and Lahore from 28 October to 1 November.

Pakistan and South Africa, who are currently playing the second Test at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, will also feature in a three-match ODI series to be held at the Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad from 4 to 8 November. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S ODI WC

Sri Lanka eye big win over Pakistan to stay alive

COLOMBO, 23 OCT

Mathematically still in contention, Sri Lanka would look for a comprehensive win over already-eliminated Pakistan and favorable results from other remaining league matches to stay alive in the semifinal race in the Women's ODI World Cup, here on Friday.

Sri Lanka is currently placed at number six on the points table with four points and a net run rate of negative 1.035.

To stay alive in the tournament, the Chamari Athapaththu-led side must beat Pakistan by a big margin and hope for a string of favorable results, including India's defeat in both their remaining matches against New Zealand and Bangladesh.

Besides, Sri Lanka would also need England to beat fifth-placed New Zealand (also 4 points) on Sunday.

Sri Lanka has had a mixed tournament, registering one win, three losses, and two no results because of washed-out matches here. And come Friday, the island nation would hope for the weather Gods to bless them to stay in the mix with a win.

Sri Lanka's only win came against Bangladesh in their last match by seven runs.

For Sri Lanka, Hasini Perera, who has featured in five games so far, has been the team's best batter. —*PTI*

Pakistan vs Sri Lanka
Match starts at
3.00 pm IST

Marathon record holder Chepngetich given a 3-year ban

MONACO, 23 OCT

Women's marathon world record-holder Ruth Chepng'etich has been banned for three years after admitting a doping violation, track and field's Athletics Integrity Unit said Thursday.

The AIU said Chepng'etich admitted anti-doping rule violations over the presence and use of the banned diuretic hydrochlorothiazide, or HCTZ, which can be used to disguise the use of performance-enhancing drugs. She had been suspended in July.

The AIU also said Chepng'etich had accepted the charges and sanctions following a positive test for the banned diuretic from a 14 March sample.

The 31-year-old Kenyan runner broke the world record by almost two minutes at the Chicago Marathon last year, clocking 2 hours, 9 minutes, 56 seconds.

The AIU said all Chepng'etich's achievements and records before the 14 March sample would stand. Chepng'etich could not provide an explanation for the positive test when she was first interviewed in April. At a later interview on July 11, she was confronted with evidence acquired from her mobile telephone indicating "a reasonable suspicion that her positive test may have been intentional," the AIU said. —*PTI*

Athlete suspended over domicile issue

NEW DELHI, 23 OCT

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has suspended wrestler Sanjeev after discrepancies were found in his domicile and identity documents, according to a notice issued by the federation on Thursday.

The WFI said it had received documents from Sanjeev showing conflicting information regarding his place of birth and residence between Delhi and Haryana.

According to the notice, a birth certificate for the wrestler was issued by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Rohini Zone, in August 2022 -- 22 years after his recorded date of birth on 20 November 2000.

Within weeks, a Haryana Resident Certificate was issued to him by the state government in September 2022.

Subsequently, the Regional Passport Office in Delhi issued a passport to Sanjeev in June 2023, listing Delhi as his place of birth and address, while records from the Citizen Resource Information Department (CRID) of Haryana reflected him as a resident of Jind, Haryana.

Citing these inconsistencies, the WFI said it was unable to verify the genuine domicile of the wrestler and has sought clarifications from the concerned authorities, including the MCD, the Haryana government, and the Regional Passport Office.

"In view of the above discrepancies, the WFI is unable to ascertain the genuine domicile of the said wrestler, whether Delhi or Haryana," the notice stated. —*PTI*

MESSI EXTENDS INTER MIAMI STAY, SIGNS NEW CONTRACT TILL 2028

FLORIDA, 23 OCT

Lionel Messi has inked a blockbuster contract extension with Inter Miami CF, committing to the club through the 2028 Major League Soccer season, the team announced Thursday.

The deal, whispered about for months amid Messi's transformative impact, locks in the Argentine icon for three additional years beyond his current pact, which was set to expire at the end of 2025 after he joined mid-2023 on a two-and-a-half-year agreement. Coming just hours before Inter Miami's playoff opener against Nashville SC on Friday, the extension signals Messi's faith in the Herons' rising project under co-owner David Beckham.

Now on the cusp of a second consecutive MLS MVP nod, Messi's loyalty could propel Inter Miami deeper into the postseason, blending his World Cup pedigree with American ambition for what promises to be a golden era in South Florida. Messi's 13 goals at World Cups are the most of any Argentina player, with seven of those arriving in Qatar three years ago, including two in a famous final victory over France. —*PTI*

Lionel Messi
PHOTO: X/@LEOMESSI

India's young shuttlers shine at Asia C'ships

CHENGDU, 23 OCT

Lakshya Rajesh and Diksha Sudhakar reached the pre-quarterfinals in the girls' singles with contrasting wins, while Jagsher Singh Khangurra made the same stage in the boys' event on day two of the Badminton Asia U-17 & U-15 Championships, here.

In the U-17 girls' singles, Lakshya eased past Chinese Taipei's Kuan Yi Lin 21-17, 21-11, while Diksha produced a strong comeback to beat China's Luo Ya Ru 17-21, 21-16, 21-11 in her match on Wednesday night.

Among the boys, Jagsher impressed with a commanding 21-14, 21-17 victory over China's Zhang Yu Feng..

India's doubles contingent also looked sharp.The girls' doubles pair Deepak Raj Aditi and P. Vriddhi overcame Malaysia's Sue Mei Teoh/Zi Qing Wan 22-20, 21-12, while the U-15 mixed duo Hemanth Sri Sammetla and Sharayu Ranjane cruised past fifth-seed Singapore pairing Ng Yu Ze/Loo Kit Rei Chara 21-9, 21-11 to move into the Round of 16. —*PTI*

Lakshya Rajesh
PHOTO: PTI

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2025-26

Enzo scores for Chelsea in a 5-1 win vs Ajax

LONDON, 23 OCT

Chelsea thumped Ajax Amsterdam 5-1 in an eventful if error-strewn UEFA Champions League 2025-26 game that included three penalties and a red card in pouring rain at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday night.

Enzo Maresca's gamble in making 10 changes paid off as Marc Guiu and Moises Caicedo struck before Enzo Fernandez and Estevao converted from the penalty spot in the first half

Ajax, which has now lost all three European games this season, had its fate sealed in the 17th minute when captain Kenneth Taylor was sent off for a dangerous tackle, and Marc Guiu scored a minute later.

Moises Caicedo made it 2-0 nine minutes later and, though Wout Weghorst reduced the deficit with a penalty, his strike was followed by spot kicks late in the first half from Chelsea's Enzo Fernandez and 18-year-old Brazilian Estevao as the Amsterdam side lost discipline. Chelsea, which has two wins and a defeat from its three Champions League games so far, buzzed around Ajax's area for most of the second half, which included an early goal from Tyrique George.

Atalanta was held to a 0-0 draw at home to Slavia Prague in a game of spurned chances and saves from both keepers.

The host moves on to four points after losing 4-0 away to champion Paris Saint-Germain before beating Club Brugge 2-1, while Slavia is on two points, having opened with a 2-2 draw at home to Bodo/Glimt followed by a 3-0 defeat at Inter Milan. —*PTI*

ENZO MARESCA
PHOTO: X/@CHELSEAFC